

Living World of the *Adivasis* of West Bengal



The Asiatic Society

Pratichi

Pratichi Institute

Living World of the Adivasis of West Bengal
An Ethnographic Exploration

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Kumar Rana and Manabesh Sarkar

with

Subhra Das and Mukhlesur Rahaman Gain



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Foreword

Amartya Sen

Of the different disadvantaged groups in India, the tribal populations, or the Adivasis, stand out as the most deprived, according to widely available general statistics about comparative living standards. While the economic and social conditions of Dalits – and other marginalized groups – can be quite terrible, the Adivasis seem to do even worse. Even though there are variations in the living standards of different sections of the Adivasi population in West Bengal, this generalization seems to hold in this state as well.

If that is reason enough for us to want to study the lives and deprivations of Adivasis in West Bengal, a further reason is provided by the lack of respect that the Adivasis frequently have to accept and live with. Material disadvantages may be powerfully supplemented by a deprivation of dignity in the lives of Adivasis. That too is a reason for us to study and understand better what brings these deprivation and disrespect to the lives of most Adivasis.

A third problem is the widespread inability of the Adivasis to have elementary cultural opportunities, including their being able to maintain their traditional cultural lives and behavioral priorities. The lack of such cultural capability would be a matter of great concern no matter how rich the traditional life styles are. But in the case of the Adivasis the cultural traditions are often very rich, with many creative features, the loss of which must be an issue of concern not just for the Adivasis themselves, but for all the people in the wider society who too could benefit from the cultural offerings of Adivasi traditions.

To these concerns we can add a fourth, in particular the evidence that Adivasis' deprivations arise not merely from the lack of private resources and the

prejudices of the society at large, but also from the neglect of their interests in the governmental distribution of public facilities. This seems to apply in many different fields, including education, health care, employment offerings, forest rights, among others.

The Pratichi Trust has had a long-standing interest in studying the lives and deprivations of Adivasis. This study is a reflection of that interest. We have been able to carry out this investigation in collaboration with the Asiatic Society, which shares our concerns and were in a position to join hands with us.

We are very happy that the study has been completed, and even though a more detailed inquiry would have given us a more complete picture, we do get a much fuller understanding through our findings of the “Living World of the Adivasis of West Bengal.” The grimness of that “living world” demands a clearer appreciation of the nature of the difficulties and deprivations faced by the Adivasi population of West Bengal.

A final word on our motivation. The lack of curiosity in the society at large, which we tend to observe, about the problems that the Adivasis face, and about the causal relations that contribute to the severity of these problems, are not only disturbing in themselves, but it – this lack of interest – also tends to make the removal of these severe problems that much harder. It is interesting that while in the third century BC Emperor Ashoka pointed to the need to pay attention to the rights of “forest people,” that needed attention has very rarely materialized. Problems can be removed only if their natures are understood with some clarity. We very much hope that this study will contribute to a better understanding of the huge deprivations from which so many of the Adivasis – our fellow citizens – suffer, and that this will help in generating a determination – and some ability – to remove Adivasi deprivation. Greater knowledge and understanding, while important in themselves, can help in the work of removing the deprivations observed. We very much hope that this study will have that dual role.

Preface

The present publication entitled “The Living World of the Adivasis of West Bengal” is the fruition of a research work conducted by Pratichi Institute in collaboration with the Asiatic Society, Kolkata. Originally the project was submitted by Pratichi Institute, Kolkata, to Asiatic Society for its consideration sometime in 2017. After initial academic discussions in a workshop by the scholars and participants organized on July 5-6, 2017 at Asiatic Society, a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between two organizations in January 2018. The preparatory schedules for conducting field work were framed and they were canvassed in some selected sampled villages for pre-testing. Based on the result of pre-testing final research tools were prepared for undertaking required field work. Actually the field operation was conducted for about three months between March to June, 2018 covering basically ten districts and twenty tribal communities. Marginal extension of field work and interviews were done among other tribal communities also beyond the initial locations mentioned above.

Before the actual field work, five days training was also conducted for the field workers, fifty percent of them being from different tribal communities. Preliminary findings were placed in a workshop again organised at Asiatic Society on January 8, 2018 where Professor Amartya Sen was also present. After attending to the clarifications and observations raised by the participants at different stages, Pratichi Institute submitted their final report which is now being published.

The Asiatic Society since its foundation in 1784 and following the academic mandate formulated by its founder President, Sir William Jones, through his annual discourses has been carrying out its researches and publications in

various academic fields, broadly under the domain of History, Science and Art. Researches are normally conducted either by the in-house Research Fellows or based on external projects submitted by senior scholars or institutions. In the present case the unique feature is that the premier institution of National Importance i.e. the Asiatic Society has been a collaborator with a comparatively new and eminent research institution, named Pratichi Institute, under the patronage of Professor Amartya Sen, the Noble Laureate. In the academic programmes and publications of Asiatic Society tribal communities got reflected in very many ways in different states of the country specially eastern and north-eastern parts. The attempt of the present work has been to bring into relief in a wider context the basic problems of life faced by the so called marginal social groups categorized as tribes or the adivasis. The focus of the study has also been to understand the nature of disadvantage, by way of interpreting their given predicament as well as by suggesting some indicative measures for their emancipation from the ill conditions of health, education and other opportunities. It will be perhaps worthwhile if the results of the present publication are considered seriously by not only the scholars alone but also by the planners, administrators and social activists for stretching the scope of the present work both academically as well as pragmatically.

Kolkata
06.02.2020

Dr. S. B. Chakrabarti
General Secretary
THE ASIATIC SOCIETY

Acknowledgements

The involvement of the present team in the coordination of this report is a coincidence – a necessary and useful coincidence. It might have been possible for the report to come out without the present association. But, it was not the case with the tens of hundreds of study participants, without whose very generous support it would have been impossible to present before the readers such an exercise that ambitiously seeks to be epistemologically important and practically relevant. Our memory of fieldwork is full of warmth and generosity of the Adivasi people we have interacted with. The hospitality offered by the financially poor but culturally opulent households was no less than hypnotic. This was especially so because they knew fully well that they were not going to get any direct benefit from the study for which they were contacted. And yet, we hardly remember any household member who, despite being very busy in work, showed impatience or irritation while giving the long interview – of about two hours each. Words are too inadequate to acknowledge fully the gifted opportunity that the study participants had created for the study team.

We are very grateful to the participants of the two workshops hosted by the Asiatic Society: The first workshop was organized to finalize the study design and tools, and the second was arranged to present before the audience the preliminary findings of the study. The very rich inputs received in the workshops added to the content and presentation of the report in a much meaningful way. This apart, the team has received motivation from the queries about the progress and suggestions on the work from some of the remarkably curious workshop participants. We have also drawn substantially from the discussion followed by a presentation of the preliminary findings in the Kolkata Group meeting, attended by academics and activists from across the globe. Our sincere thanks to the participants of that meeting.

It would not have been possible for us to present the report without the academic guidance and moral inspiration from Amartya Sen, S B Chakrabarti, and Jean Dreze. Intellectual support from P P Ghosh, Debi Chatterjee, Achin Chakraborty, Ramkrishna Chatterjee, Alok Kanti Bhaumik, A. K. Roy, Krishna Hembrom, Sadaruddin Biswas, Soumitra Sankar Sengupta, Manisha Banerjee, and Antara Dev Sen has added much to make the study possible. We have also received valuable comments and suggestions from Janajit Ray, Anirban Chattopadhyay, Runa Basu, Apoorvanand, and Abhijit Chowdhury on the draft chapters. We are ever indebted to all of them.

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We are thankful to the West Bengal SC, ST & OBC Development & Finance Corporation and the Department of Health and Family Welfare, for extending very kind logistical support for carrying out the fieldwork.

Anwesha Rana's careful editorial assistance has added to the readability of the text. Poulami Das has made a valuable contribution by preparing the maps. Urba Choudhury and Manoj Dey have designed the cover of the report. We acknowledge our debt to all of them.

We record our sincere gratitude to all our colleagues whose encouragements have played a part in the making of the report.

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Abbreviations

AAY	Antodaya Anna Yojana
ANM	Auxiliary Nursing Midwife
APL	Above Poverty Line
ASHA	Accredited Social Health Activist
BMI	Bio Mass Index
BPHC	Block Primary Health Centre
BPL	Below Poverty Line
FMR	Female Male Ratio
FPS	Fair Price Shop
FRA	The Scheduled Adivasis and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006
FRC	Forest Right Committees
GER	Gross Enrolment Ratio
GoI	Government of India
GoWB	Government of West Bengal
HH	Household
IAY	Indira Awaas Yojana
ICDS	Integrated Child Development Services
IIPS	International Institute for Population Science
IMR	Infant Mortality Rate
JFM	Joint Forest Management
LPG	Liquid Petroleum Gas
MDMS	Mid-day Meal Scheme
MFP	Minor Forest Produce
MGNREG	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee
MGNREGA	Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act
MoAFW	Ministry of Agriculture & Farmers Welfare
MoA	Ministry of Agriculture

MoHA	Ministry of Home Affairs
MoHFW	Ministry of Health and Family Welfare
MoLJ	Ministry of Law and Justice
MoPR	Ministry of Panchayati Raj
MoRD	Ministry of Rural Development
MoSPI	Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation
MoTA	Ministry of Tribal Affairs
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NCD	Non-Communicable Diseases
NFHS	National Family Health Survey
NFSA	The National Food Security Act, 2013
NSS	National Sample Survey
NTFP	Non-timber forest produces
OPD	Outpatient Department
PDS	Public Distribution System
PER	Purchase-entitlement ratio
PHC	Primary Health Centre
PHH	Priority Household
PMAY-G	Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin
PVTG	Particularly Vulnerable Adivasi Group
RKSY	Rajya Khadya SurakshaYojana
RTE	The Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009
SC	Scheduled Caste
SPHH	Priority Household with Sugar
ST	Scheduled Tribe
TG	Tea Garden
UMR	Under-five Mortality Rate
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
WPR	Worker Population Ratio

1. Introduction

1.1 The Adivasi and Human Vulnerability

The year 2018 was no different from any other. People in Jangal Mahal in the south-western part of West Bengal had begun preparations for the celebration of *bandhna*, or *sobrai* – the harvest festival. Traditionally, mid-November has been the time for the first harvest in the uplands. The main harvest, in the low lands, was yet to begin – in December. With the introduction of newer varieties of crops and the changes in climate, the agricultural cycle had changed with time. Yet, some traditions continue. With the advent of November, people engaged in cultivating the land start preparing for the celebration – it is not just a festival but rather the retelling of their history, the history of crop growing, the wait through the hungry months for food, the desperate straits that their fore parents had had to face and overcome. Then there are other histories of other people like the Kharia Savar, or simply Savar¹, an Adivasi indigenous community (Scheduled Tribe–ST–to follow the governmental definition)². Their history is much about

1 The multiple nomenclatures– more likely to have been given by others rather than being self assigned – have had some confusing effect on their official categorisation, and in turn, on the understanding of the community's socio-economic status: in the Census of India records, we find two categories, namely, (a) Lodha, Kheria, Kharia, and (b) Savar. But in popular perception, there are two different Savars – Lodha Savar and Kharia Savar, the former being predominant in West Medinipur (undivided), and the latter being the residents mainly of Purulia, Bankura, and West Medinipur (undivided). Again, the term Lodha seems to be a relatively recent attribution; there is no mention of Lodha in Risley's descriptive lexicon, *The Tribes & Castes of Bengal* (see Risley 1891). Nevertheless, socio-economic parameters, like the literacy rate and the work participation rate and pattern place the Lodha Savars and the Kharia Savars on the same plane. The problem has been recognised by the High Level Expert Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India, See GoI (2014), p.24.

2 “Groups and communities identified and enumerated as tribes during British rule came to be re-classified as Scheduled Tribes after the Constitution was adopted in 1950. The Constitution, as per Article 342, provided for the listing of these groups in the Schedule so that certain

loss: Forced separation from their natural settings and falling into the black hole of perennial hunger and premature death. In November 2018, when the area was preparing for the festival, seven adults of the Kharia Savar community, including a woman, died within a span of just two weeks. The average age of the deceased was 42. They lived 26 years less than an average Indian is expected to live. The deaths occurred in a 34-household hamlet of a village, Jangalkhas, in Binpur I Block of the present Jhargram district. Since life for such people is full of uncertainties, death appears to be the only certainty and is considered the most normal of happenings. The dead were cremated, without any autopsy, and thus, the cause of death could not be medically verified. The villagers who lived on without being affected much by these deaths held that the deceased were suffering from tuberculosis. “It was not undernourishment,” claimed the state authorities, “They died of tuberculosis and excessive drinking.”³ What is intriguing, however, relates to the phenomenon of alienation that emerges from this: despite the village’s proximity to several public offices — the panchayat, block, and district headquarters — and being surrounded by other ethnic groups with better access to information, and despite the Savars having been economically connected with the relatively advantaged neighbours, the real reasons that caused the deaths were hardly recognised by the public at large. The systematic surveillance of the administrative authorities over the population in all other matters of their lives failed to detect anything about the catastrophe until some of the surviving inhabitants of the village wrote a humble prayer to rescue them from hunger and diseases.

Others remained ignorant because people tend to be inherently complacent enough to accept and even normalize the assumption that some of their co-citizens were destined to a life worse than theirs and hence qualitatively below par. Such fatalistic and extremely damaging beliefs have been accepted and internalised by the suffering populace as well. A member of the team of health workers who visited the village narrated to us her experiences:

Villagers did not complain about undernourishment because they know for sure that they eat twice a day, and they eat the normal diet of rice, occasionally a stomach full but often half-full. Vegetables, pulses, animal

administrative and political concessions could be extended to them. Thus, a distinction was drawn in the form of tribe as a social and cultural entity and tribe as a politico-administrative category. However, there were groups and communities who belonged linguistically, socially and culturally to the same community but found themselves listed in some States of the Indian Union but not in other, often neighbouring States. Similarly within the State, the same community may have found itself listed in some regions but not in others.” See GoI (2014), p.24.

3 Anandabazar Patrika (2018)

protein are of course rarities. Milk or fruit never appear even in their dreams. The relatives of the deceased had only their fate to blame. They are born poor and they die poor. We, as trained health workers, know for sure that the food they eat contain little nutrition but for them the same is normal. For us, the kind of work they do – collecting firewood and leaves from the distant forest and selling them in the faraway marketplaces – is back breaking but for them it is normal. Going to bed hungry is normal. And, drinking is also very normal. A man told us that he could not work without drinking – all the menfolk drink. And they drink on empty stomachs, since food is scarce. And food is scarce because they drink. The relationship constitutes a vicious circle...An answer to the question why they drink so much when they cannot afford food is beyond our imagination. They seem to live in a world which is miles apart from ours. I felt so helpless.⁴

Indeed, our interactions during fieldwork suggested a distinctly clear and vastly different construction of rationality between the Adivasis and others. There certainly are wide inter-group variations among the different communities of Adivasis. Some live in the Himalayan hills and some in the dry plateau area of the south-western part of the state; some were made to migrate by the British from the south to work and settle in the tea gardens of Jalpaiguri or find wage work in the Malda region or settle in the Sundarbans. Some are socio-economically better placed than others but geographically and ethnically more marginalized than those groups; some treat others as beings of lower strata. Almost each group has a distinct tongue – often incomprehensible to others; they differ in skin colour and culture, customs and patterns of living. Nevertheless, despite such variations one common thread of the Adivasis' construction of rationality is the sense of alienation – their perception of themselves often being forced upon them by others.

Take, for example, Mintu Oraon (names changed throughout), a person from a tea garden village in Jalpaiguri district. He does not drink as he believes that it was the lure of drinking that led to his forefathers leaving their homes behind in the present state of Jharkhand. He remembered the stories his grandparents had told him about the hills and forests of Chhotanagpur, the golden rice fields, huge buffalos that drew the plough, and cows and goats that grazed near the hills. They had to abandon their most beautiful land to become day labourers in the tea-gardens, and it all happened, he believed, because his forefathers were so addicted to drinking that they failed to understand the trickery of the middlemen who recruited labourers for the British planters. Of a complex history of

4 Interviewed on 15 November 2018. The team member preferred anonymity.

structural violence — of colonial rule, feudal exploitation, land alienation, and pauperization — he remembered only a part of it. But, for him,

This is very important for me. I don't want to become homeless again. My forefathers inherited a beautiful country from their forefathers, but could not retain it. But, I want to retain what I have inherited from my ancestors. I have a distressed life, often we remain unemployed and unfed; and yet, I don't want to leave this place. Drinking may lead to my displacement from this land, and who knows, what will befall me and my family; we are very poor, we are deprived of public facilities. We die without any medical help, our children leave the school halfway and become labourers, yet we have a neighbourhood of our own. It is impossible to survive in an alien neighbourhood – surrounded by others with whom we do not share our way of life...I know, I cannot stop others drinking. Many people have forgotten our past, even most of the Oraon folks don't speak our mother tongue Kurukh, and they don't know at all what Kurukh is. It is a very sweet language, sweeter than honey. But young generations have no idea about it. All this happened due to the disastrous habit of drinking that the *diku* (non-Adivasi) middlemen thrust upon our forefathers. I won't fall into that trap. Come what may I want to live an Oraon and die an Oraon.

A relatively well-off Santal of Bankura district, who had the opportunity of attending high school, spoke about the alienation, albeit in a different way.

It is as though we are destined to be at the receiving end of perennial oppression. The local land owners fraudulently grabbed our land in the past; it is our land, and yet, we are made to live like outsiders. We work as wage labourers in the lands that once belonged to us. Funds that come in the name of tribal development are being stolen midway. Teachers in the school do not only not speak our language but also talk about it disparagingly; Adivasi children are hardly taught anything in school. The political parties are dominated by the *dikus*, who happen to be either the land owners or traders or both. Traditional exploiters set the norm as to who would live in what way. So, we have no place anywhere – there is no education in school, no treatment in the hospital, no earning opportunity. They have even plundered the forest which used to be a major source of our livelihood. They all say sweet words about us but treat us like slaves. So, since the government is also dominated by the *dikus*, whatever it has been doing for the Adivasis is hardly right; it acts to protect the interest of the *dikus*. Or else, tell me, why the Adivasis are still so poor, while others in the neighborhood have managed to prosper? Why despite a similar human body are we and the *dikus* so different from each other?

The construction of otherness and differential rationality among different Adivasi communities seem to have had different routes, including land alienation and consequent pauperization (as in the case of the Santals, Oraons, Mundas and others from the greater Jharkhandi cultural region), linguistic and cultural variations (for almost all groups), disastrous changes in natural settings owing to deforestation and what is being termed as ‘development,’ and resultant reshaping of habitations, livelihood and relationships both with nature and other human beings (the Lodhas and Kharia Savars in southern Bengal and the Dukpas in Buxa hills of present Alipurduar district are among the glaring examples). As per the recollection of a Dukpa of Buxaduar,

We have been living here, who knows for how long...I am born here, so were my parents, grandparents, and their grandparents. Harvesting oranges from the orchards on the hills, grazing cattle and growing some crops in the valleys gave us self-reliance. There was only one primary school and children from some hamlets could not even attend it as it was 11 km away from their homes; there was only one health centre in the vicinity, and that too was defunct; yet, we did not complain much. We lived happily, in our scattered hamlets, in the *goth* (seasonal habitations in the valleys where people grazed the cattle and cultivated the lands), and within the community. But, suddenly, one day the government had all the orange trees felled – they said they were causing harm to the environment. That was in 1992, and after that everything changed; orange was our main source of income, so, in absence of that we became plain hand-to-mouth day labourers. The government wanted us to abandon the hamlets to make a combined one in one place. We were told that the government would deliver the services like education, health, food supply, etc. if we lived in one place. But, how could we do that, where would we get the land for *goth*? Most of all, we have been living like this for generations, how can we simply abandon the path that our previous generations followed?

Similarly, a Kharia Savar of Purulia told us that his people did not want anything from the government.

Just give us back the abundant forest, on which many of our previous generations had survived, and can help us survive too. You have opened schools that do not teach our children, you have opened hospitals where we cannot get treated, you give us rice at Rs 2 per kilogram, which does not sustain us more than a week in a month, we still depend upon the forest, but since most of it has been denuded, we don't get enough to survive....And, for God's sake, remove this tag of “burglar” from our *jat* (group identity), and stop harassing us. You know, all the Savars are

suspect. The police, the forest officials, common public, nobody trusts us. Had the forest been there the entire situation would have been different.

1.2 Disowned Moral Obligations

Whether people would have been happy with the forests, hills, oranges, *goth* and cultivable land or made other departures in terms of participating in worldly affairs in differently interactive ways cannot be established with certainty. Whether the abundant forest would have prevented the premature deaths of the Savars of Jangalkhas (or of Amlasole in 2004, where a number of hunger deaths hit the headlines) or ensured better nutritional status of the Adivasis of the tea gardens in North Bengal or protected the Santals, Mundas, Koras and fellow Adivasis from being subjugated to poverty, hunger, and life-threatening diseases cannot be ascertained. “History” as was articulated in a different context, “is not abominable to retrospective correction.”⁵ Therefore, it becomes doubly mandatory that the injustice and unfairness perpetuated against the indigenous peoples is set right by ensuring justice and fairness in the present times. The applicability of the moral obligation is universal — indigenous peoples in most parts of the world have been subjected to multifaceted inhumanity — which has found clear articulation in the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), 2007. Acknowledging that “...indigenous peoples have suffered from historic injustices as a result of, inter alia, their

5 Mitra et al (1992), famously known as Mitra Commission Report.



Smile camouflages back-breaking work: A Lepcha family

colonization and dispossession of their lands, territories and resources, thus preventing them from exercising, in particular, their right to development in accordance with their own needs and interests,...” it underscores that, “states shall in consultation and cooperation with indigenous peoples take specific measures to protect” their interests in various ways including education, health, livelihood options and other rights. “Indigenous peoples,” it insists, “have the right to determine and develop priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development” and “to be actively involved in developing and determining health, housing and other economic and social programmes affecting them and, as far as possible, to administer such programmes through their own institutions.” Most importantly, it recognizes “that the situation of indigenous peoples varies from region to region and from country to country and that the significance of national and regional particularities and various historical and cultural backgrounds should be taken into consideration.”⁶

In India, moral obligations have been reflected in the Constitution and several other policy documents. Despite the proclamations of protecting the Adivasis from various injustices, the “tribal [Adivasi] communities face disregard for their values and culture, breach of protective legislations, serious material and social deprivation, and aggressive resource alienation,” finds the High Level Expert Committee on Socio-Economic, Health and Educational Status of Tribal Communities of India (Expert Committee, this point forward).⁷ The constituency of the Adivasis in India, and the conditions that have shaped the nature of the discrimination and injustices faced by them led the Expert Committee to chart out for the government a path that resembles in some ways the UN Declaration.⁸

Indeed, the constituency of the Adivasis of India has a strong connection with the conditions for the violation of democratic norms against the Adivasis. Had they been able to form a country of their own, with a population of 104,545,716,

6 United Nations (2007)

7 GoI (2014), p.32

8 The general guideline drawn by the Expert Committee includes: • An empowered citizenry and a functioning, participatory (including participation of women) self-governance; • Due share in socio-economic progress for tribal people and their habitations, including facilities like health, education, livelihood, drinking water, sanitation, roads, electricity and sustainable income, in situ; • Protecting the land and forest rights of tribal communities; • Protection of the right to natural resources in tribal lands; • Natural and mineral wealth of the nation held in the tribal lands cannot be alienated against their will. Ensuring the share in the wealth and income generated from the resources in the lands parted by the communities: • A reasonable share of the wealth generated by the resources in their homelands must accrue to them by law: and • Ensuring the right to preservation of their language, culture and traditions, and recognition, protection and documentation against the loss of identity, and allowing them to thrive as a dynamic living culture. Ibid, p 33

according to the 2011 Census, it would have been the 12th most populous country in the world. Yet, in the Indian context, with a share of 8.6 percent of the total population of the country (1210, 854,977) they are numerically marginalised, especially because of the Adivasi population's very uneven and scattered distribution across the states. The highest and the lowest shares of total Adivasi population across the states of the country are 15 percent in Madhya Pradesh and 0.1 percent in Goa; some of the Union Territories share even less than these figures. The range of the shares of Adivasis in the total population of the Indian states varies between 94 percent and less than one percent. Nevertheless, although Adivasis in some of the north-eastern states and Union Territories form the majority of the population of the respective states, in terms of their share to the total Adivasi population of the country they form less than 10 percent. Nearly three fourths of the total Adivasi population in the country is concentrated in the central, western, and eastern regions (Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Odisha); but, barring Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand, their share to total population is not significant enough to influence the political and social dynamics.

A major source of their organizational weakness, however, seems to be their wide inter-group diversity. There are 705 officially recorded Adivasi groups in the country, the smallest being Adiramo in Arunachal Pradesh with only 10 persons and the largest being the Bhils with 17,071,049 heads (forming 16 percent of the total Adivasi population in the country) spread across 12 states. Varied numerical, historical, linguistic and cultural tracts have resulted in huge socio-economic variations among the different groups. For example, in the same state of Arunachal Pradesh while the literacy of one group (Hotang Tangsa) is 100 percent, the corresponding figure for another group (Sulung Bangni) is 18 percent.

1.3 Adivasis in West Bengal

Let us turn to West Bengal, the state with which this report is concerned. With 5,296,953 persons, Adivasis in West Bengal form six percent of the total population. In other words, Adivasis of West Bengal form five percent of the total Adivasi population of the country. However, as in the all-India scenario, Adivasis of West Bengal are not only far behind the average population in terms of human development (poor literacy rate, abysmally higher reliance on low-paid agricultural labour hiring, poor health status), but also appear to be more deprived than the Adivasis of other states. For instance, the all-India average of the difference between the literacy rates among all population (73 percent) and the STs (59 percent), is 14 percentage points, the corresponding figure for West Bengal is 18 (literacy rate among all and STs being 76 percent and 58 percent

respectively). Similarly, while the proportion of agricultural labourers among the main workers within the Adivasis is 12 percentage points higher than that of all populations (Adivasis 36 percent; all population 24 percent), in West Bengal the corresponding figure (26 percentage point) is more than double (Adivasis 49 per cent; all 23 per cent). Again, the Expert Committee mentioned earlier finds that West Bengal's Adivasi situation is worse than many other states in terms of:

Intake of all nutrients, barring thiamine, niacin and vitamin C (p2016); higher prevalence of tobacco consumption (p215); higher intake of alcohol (p217); lower drainage facilities in the habitations (p 222); huge doctors' shortfall at the Primary Health Centre (PHC)s level in tribal areas (p227); inadequate displacement package and poor implementation of the compensation packages for the Adivasis displaced due to the projects related to water resource, and causing loss of livelihood and increased hardship (p 275); and poor rate of implementation of the centrally sponsored schemes for the Adivasis (Pp381-2).

The general deprivations seem to be linked not only with poor implementation of the programmes concerning the Adivasis but also with the very framing of policies, which are often oblivious to the complex constitution of the Adivasi world. As at the national level, Adivasis in West Bengal consist of diverse socio-cultural, linguistic, and geographical backgrounds. Variations in the socio-economic status of the Adivasis are even more striking: the broad spatial (inter district) differences are further complicated by inter-group and intra-group variations. For example, the literacy rate of all Adivasis in the state is 58 percent (one percentage point less than the all-India average), but the inter-district figures range between 44 percent (Uttar Dinajpur) and 82 percent (Kolkata). Similarly, the inter-community literacy rates vary between 32 percent (Gorait) and 88 percent (Magh). Again, for the same group (for example, the Santals) there are considerable spatial differences. In the same line, while 49 percent of all Adivasis depend upon agricultural wage work for livelihood, the community wise figures vary between five percent (Tamang) and 70 percent (Khond); in case of cultivation as the main occupation the lowest and highest range between two communities vary between one percent (Magh) and 43 percent (Lepcha) (the average being 15 percent). In addition to spatial, inter-community, and intra-community variations there are also huge differences between the two genders.

1.4 Knowledge Gap and Faltering Public Action

It seems that there exists — both in public and academic domains — a wide knowledge gap about this selectively forgotten, and pragmatically remembered population of the country. Who they are, where they live, what they do, their socio-economic status, their cultural and linguistic practices, are issues on which

information is largely fragmented and vague. For example, in West Bengal, there are 40 Adivasi groups notified by the government as Scheduled Tribes (STs). Yet, most people use the terms Adivasi and Santal interchangeably, while the latter, in fact, is but one of the 40 notified tribes forming 47 percent of the total ST population. Wide socio-economic variations between the different Adivasi groups and within the specific Adivasi communities, despite having been shown in the Census data, have hardly attracted any attention either in public policy or in general discussion. Anthropological works related to individual communities, on the other hand, often tend to take an insular approach, ignoring the external influences and interactions. Similarly, the picturisation of Adivasis in the public domain largely relates to their living in forests and adjacent hamlets, eking out their living by hunting and tending cows, keeping themselves reserved to the pleasure world of singing, dancing, and drinking. Their rich linguistic and cultural heritage, and their potential to interact with other societies on equal terms do not seem to have found any base among the apparently mainstream societies. A widely prevailing belief that brackets the Adivasis with that of a nomadic life has hardly chosen to root itself in objective reality; it has rather tended to take an easy — fictitious — route of distance and dominance.

1.5 Perspectives and Domination

The apparently artificial distance created between the Adivasis and ‘others’ has, in fact, drawn heavily from the in-built sense of superiority of the latter. While at the bottom level, the Adivasi and non-Adivasi relationship is based on crude bodily exploitation (labour and sex, for example) and deceit (grabbing land, cheating in economic transactions, to name a few), at the supra local level (in academic and other public discourses) the Adivasi is imagined as an object of museology rather than being recognized as an actual being, a living human with equal potential to flourish. This provides the rationale for domination at both levels, albeit in different forms. The crudities of direct exploitations can be, and are often, challenged with resistance movements of the Adivasis, and have found place in political-intellectual discussions; but, instead of going beyond and making a departure from this one-dimensional history by taking note of the changing socio-political and economic dynamics, scholarly works often tend to be imprisoned in the stereotypical narratives of land alienation, displacement, forced separation from forests and other natural resources, and so on. The narratives have rightly attracted attention, and perhaps need more. The history of Adivasis in India is intertwined with deceit and exploitation, displacement and deprivation. However, this attention should not have held academic research back from dealing with other — often entwined — issues, namely, labour relations, migration, deprivation of legal rights, and public services. Unfortunate

as it is, discussions based on historically constructed objectivity, have hardly resulted in any substantial effort to change the course of future history placing the Adivasis' potential to rebuild their life on their own.

1.6 Democratic Deficit and Social Sin

Dominant perspectives, drawn from and leading to, existing social relations based on democratic deficit have not only deprived the Adivasis from the moral and legal rights to land, natural resources, livelihood, and public support, but also, in turn, have resulted in the failure to draw from the Adivasi societies the deep rooted democratic values that insist on consensus rather than first-past-the-post. In other words, the casualties of violation of basic rights of the Adivasis are not limited only to the Adivasis resulting in their pauperization and subjugation but have also taken a huge toll in many other ways by depriving the entire Indian society of (a) democratic norms practised by the Adivasis, and (b) their rich knowledge of social ecology and survival strategies in adverse situations, and so on. Also, keeping one section of the society socio-economically dwarfed has adversely affected the entire country, as the same contributes to the country falling short in terms of total economic and social productivity, and thereby distorting the process of nation building, if not entirely falsifying it. Progress, whether social, economic or political, invariably requires equal opportunity for all to participate in all spheres of life. But despite being robust in some senses, while dealing with the Adivasi question, India's social arrangements have so far been more unfair than just. Opportunities to acquire education, to ensure good health, and to participate in academic and policy discussions are almost non-existent. The absence of basic facilities like functional schools with equitable delivery of education, in turn, result in obstructing the progresses that some of the public policies like reservation in jobs, education, and legislative bodies are expected to bring about. Paucity of educational facilities is manifested in different forms: from lack of schools, teachers to the difficulty of language and marginalisation in school and higher education premises. Inexcusable in itself, lack of educational opportunities have also their bearings on other public services, namely, healthcare, food security, employment guarantee, and protection of basic rights. To illustrate, there is a general scarcity of public facilities in the Adivasi areas; conditions are further aggravated by the poor functioning of the existing provisions; again, this is closely linked with lack of voice, which could find strength from educational achievements and be used to make the facilities functional. A vicious cycle of neglect, voicelessness, and further neglect is thrust upon the Adivasis causing eternal marginalisation and adverse participation. For example, Adivasi women form the bulk of illiterates of the country, and again they are made to contribute to the major chunk of

the agricultural labour force. Ironically, the results of this democratic denial—diminutive level of socio-economic achievements of the Adivasis — are often attributed to imaginary cultural constructs: “Adivasis are neglectful of education and health, superstitious, and backward looking.”

1.7 Alienation and Subjugation

Democratic denial and adverse participation have not only influenced the socio-economic underdevelopment of the Adivasis, but also seemed to have made a terrible fracture in their social psyche and organisation. Continued insistence on the modernity upheld by the ruling sections as not only superior to the others but also underscored to be ‘the most enlightened and progressive’ has more often than not had different — and disquieting — effects on the Adivasi mind. The imposed superiority of the ruling ‘modern’ resulted in the Adivasis looking down upon themselves as inferior, ‘primitive’ and taking a fatalistic view of the subjugated life they are forced to live. While this pushes them to the margin of alien others and abandon altogether some of their socially unifying customs and cultural practices, particularly democratic norms and human values that have evolved through a protracted journey of collective living and struggles for existence, the helplessness owing to this process of ‘othering’ thrusts upon them segregated insularity. One casualty, for instance, of the imposed inferiority on the Adivasis is the erosion of the great linguistic heritage among some sections of the Adivasis. However, their acceptance of the imposed modern does not guarantee their inclusion into the apparent mainstream; rather, they are often reminded of their ‘primitive’ roots and kept alienated. Again, pushed by the primitiveness of the ruling modern — exploitation and oppression, marginalisation and subjugation — the Adivasis, in many cases, cling to oppressive behaviours such as witchcraft, which makes the ‘primitive’ mark on them even more indelible. The vicious cycle of political-economic deprivation and social alienation continues to keep the Adivasis subjugated to the ruling modern. Supplying cheap labour and living half-fed lives with no opportunity to nurture and develop their human capabilities are unalterable.

1.8 Public Action and Research Requirement

However, justice demands alteration – change towards inclusiveness in its fullest meaning, in every sphere of life. And, the first step toward achieving ‘just’ change cannot but be a comprehensive understanding of the problems and prospects of the Adivasis question. The epistemologically important and practically crucial requirement to develop a comprehensive understanding on the Adivasis brought the Asiatic Society and the Pratichi Institute together to initiate an empirical research. The results of the study while adding to the body of knowledge may have practical relevance for public action in order to

pursue the goal of ensuring equal and dignified participation of the Adivasis in all sphere of life. The questions that the study intended to incorporate were formulated through a public workshop involving a number of academics and activists. Broadly, the study looked at the following areas:

- ❑ Which factors influence the differential achievements of the Adivasis (a) of different spaces (districts), and (b) belonging to different communities?
- ❑ How do wider spatial, political and economic situations influence the differences in socio-economic achievements of the same cultural communities?
- ❑ How do the different population groups receive the public programmes? In other words, how do capability variations of different groups result in their taking part in the social, economic and political activities of the larger society?
- ❑ How do the Adivasis perceive the Adivasi self vis-a-vis the non-Adivasi world? What kinds of interactions between Adivasis and non-Adivasis do take place? What are the felt experiences of the Adivasis about the state, its constituency and functioning? And, how do they conceptually relate with the state and society at large?

Based on the premise the study proceeded to organise the inquiry into the following areas:

- ❑ Condition of the Adivasis as found from secondary data (with inter and intra-community variations);
- ❑ Livelihood (land ownership pattern, cultivation pattern, productivity, rights; labour – local and migratory; natural resources - rights and practices);
- ❑ Social achievements, opportunities, and constraints (education, health, employment, food security, housing, other public services);
- ❑ Perceptions and Realities (perceptions of self, perception of others, relationship with state and other powers, processes of othering, alienation, and marginalisation; perception of the ‘ruling modern’ – politicians, bureaucrats, social activists, academics, employer);
- ❑ Internal dynamics (within community, between communities, within family – gender relations, between families – kinship structure, and greater village social structure);
- ❑ Social and political structure (individual and collective; tradition-modern interface).

1.9 The Process of the Study

The above inquiry guide was finalised on 5 and 6 July 2017 during a workshop of scholars and activists at the Asiatic Society. The research team, 50 per cent of which comprised of members from various Adivasi communities across the districts, finalised the sample with help of experts (see Appendix I for details), developed the tools, discussed them with experts, had them pre-tested, and finalised in a training-workshop of the investigators. The study followed a mixed-method approach consisting of quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis. Districts selected for the study were: Purulia, Bankura, PaschimMedinipur (undivided), Birbhum, Bardhaman (undivided), Hugli, North 24 Parganas, Malda, Darjeeling (undivided), and Jalpaiguri (undivided). The sample size fixed for the study was 1000 households. While determining the sample size the study team kept two considerations in mind: Proportion to population, and a minimum number (30) to represent a particular group. Owing to the smallness of population, which was further complicated by its sparse distribution, even the minimum number was also not available for some groups. Therefore, the team had to work with 16 groups from across the state representing the ethnic diversity.⁹ The quantitative data gap was attempted to be supplemented through the analysis of qualitative interactions.

Aside from collecting quantitative information from 1,000 households from the sample districts and from among 16 selected groups, the team also interacted with different Adivasi groups through group discussions and listening to their individual stories. The team members also interacted with the local level public officials, schoolteachers, health workers, and grass root level activists. Available secondary data and literature were also analysed to our best possible ability and used to enhance the comprehensibility of the report. The preliminary findings of the study were presented and on January 8, 2019 in a workshop of scholars and activists, including Professor Amartya Sen, at the Asiatic Society. In order to gather comments and suggestions from wider public the preliminary findings were also put on the public domain (http://www.asiaticsocietykolkata.org/sites/default/files/2019-01/PRELIMINARY-FINDINGS-ADIVASI-WB-pdf_0.pdf and http://pratichi.org/sites/default/files/PRELIMINARY%20FINDINGS-ADIVASI-WB-DRAFT-pdf_0.pdf). Incorporating the feedbacks received at the workshop and also from others following the publication of the preliminary findings, the team attempted to give as much of a detailed and comparative picture as possible. It has tried to analyse the individual community

⁹ Though initially 17 groups were selected for the study, due to unavailability of *Mal Pahariya* people in our sampled areas, mainly because of (a) their being populated in some districts outside the selected ones, and (b) the concentration of their population in districts with some presence being very sparse, the number of Adivasi groups studied was fixed at 16.

specific as well as district specific data.¹⁰ Nevertheless, owing to the limitation of sample size it has not always been possible to stretch the analysis beyond a certain point. Given the constraint of sample and other methodological issues the study findings presented in this report are more indicative rather than definitive.

1.10 Main Indications of the Report

The report has been organised into seven chapters including the Introduction to the report. The Introduction has contextualized the study with the relevance of its setting and objective. It also discusses briefly the methodology and the organization of the report with the main indications of the findings.

The report then advances to discuss (in Chapter 2) the findings by beginning with one of the most crucially important freedom enhancing components, namely, education. The lower degree of educational achievement among the Adivasis has often been related, by policymakers and field level implementers alike, with that of the reluctance of the Adivasis to acquire education. Wisdom advises us that while a horse can be taken to a river, it cannot be made to drink unless it wishes to. For decades, this has been used as a handy idiom to describe the ‘innate’ reluctance of Adivasi children to be educated. However, a horse can also be conditioned not to drink, despite considerable thirst, if it has been shamed and punished from birth for every attempt at quenching its thirst. Our inquiry shows that the causality behind low educational achievement of Adivasi children, in particular, is complex, cyclical, and multivariate, ranging from intergenerational malnourishment and poverty, shaming in the classroom, identity-based bullying by peers, inadequacy of local infrastructure. Nevertheless, the study finds that given the very high degree of aspiration of the Adivasis irrespective of their group affiliation, the problem of achieving quality education by their children can — and must — be solved with some radical policy modifications.

Chapter 3 situates the issue of human development among the Adivasis with one of its central connections – health and healthcare. In all health related indicators the Adivasis find themselves far behind other social groups. Our findings suggest that the approach to the problem of healthcare of the Adivasis must take a bio-social route. The problems have multiple connections including public health, poverty, exclusion on the basis of ethnicity and language, illiteracy and poor opportunity of education, poor implementation of the public programmes

10 District specific data has always been presented following the administrative divisions that prevailed at the time of Census 2011. Following this, the districts of Paschim Medinipur, Bardhaman, Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri that were divided after 2011 have been presented here as undivided ones.

related to livelihood, nutrition, food security and employment. Having said that, it must be recognised that as time consuming as the processes of achieving the long term goals are, they can come about through some immediate actions guided towards solving some of the easily remediable problems. The centrally important task here is to strengthen the primary health system. There is no reason for patients to go to tertiary level hospitals for treatment or child birth. And why should it involve expenditure? The preconceived notion of cultural backwardness must give way to evaluate reality within its objective setting. A culture of companionship based on social morality rather than dragging down a 'professional' receiver-provider relationship must be developed. Without recognizing the Adivasis as co-citizens, no programme to improve the health status of the Adivasis, however benevolent the intentions may be, can succeed. Different experiences from home and abroad strengthen this case.

The livelihood history of the Adivasis in India entails a process of transformation of a self-reliant economy into a market-based wage economy. Chapter 4 discusses this issue by linking it with its particular historical, geo-social, ethnic, and political connections. While productive assets like land have faced alienation, the symbiotic relationship between human beings and nature has also faced distortion and led to the alienation from forestland. The shrinkage of traditional livelihood opportunities resulted from the alienation of natural resources and other problems has finally left no alternative for the Adivasis but to become wage labourers. Alas, the invisibility of state action toward creating an equitable environment for the Adivasis to enhance their capabilities to lead a decent and dignified life is contrasted sharply with the denial of basic rights and snatching away the setting blessed by nature that helped them survive for centuries. The demand raised by some Adivasis "Give us back our forest and lands, give us equal opportunity of education, give us employment, and see, whether the Adivasi can prosper or not," must find an echo to be heard by the state and dominant society.

Chapter 5 discusses how, conditioned by the country's political history, the issue of Adivasis' rights of citizenship with ensured dignity has become closely linked with the publicly supported social security programmes. That a section of our co-citizens is forced to live with a huge deficit of dignity calls for the moral intervention of the state and society to intervene positively to ensure the Adivasis have a decent life. The moral demands constitute, among other things, initiatives to establish a number of social security programmes, including food security, employment guarantee schemes and housing. Our study finds that the programmes showed tremendous potential to improve the lives of the Adivasis. In fact, the intervention on food security in West Bengal

has produced reasonably good results, though there is room for further and more fruitful improvement. But lack of clarity in policy prioritisation and faulty implementation at the grass root level, often emanating from a kind of ‘respect deficit,’ has led to the reduction of the social security programmes to mere formalities, or at best moneymaking ventures for the vested interests. Partial success of some programmes in West Bengal, food security, for example, while demonstrating the possibility of social security initiatives for the Adivasis demand radical correction in policy and practice that are respectful of the riches of Adivasi culture.

The issue of gender among the Adivasis of West Bengal, as discussed in Chapter 6, shows a complex picture. While women in general are subject to various discriminations, there has been substantial variation in the nature of deprivations among different social groups. The subject of gender equality is a complex issue that involves both private and public spheres of life. However, the issues of inequalities in the private spheres are not unrelated to the public sphere. Rather, the failure of public intervention on the urgent issues of literacy, healthcare and other basic facilities has perhaps made things more problematic. In short, gender equality has to be looked at as a larger democratic question. While it needs special attention to improve the status of women in terms of education, health, employment, and representation, the issue of equality among different segments of the society cannot be neglected.

Finally, taking lead from the previous discussions, Chapter 7 offers a general conclusion calling for urgent policy modifications. The main suggestion of the report makes it imperative to reverse the entire outlook on the Adivasi question. Instead of seeing the Adivasis as ‘problems,’ the entire country can benefit massively by perceiving the Adivasis as co-citizens and sharing their historically constructed cultural values which often manifest the best forms of democracy and uphold the notions of higher levels of justice, fairness and equality compared to those that prevail in the seemingly mainstream societies. By ensuring their rights to live their own lives, the country can in fact guarantee itself a flourishing democracy. Owing to statistical and other practical problems we could not incorporate the numerically smaller groups into the purview of the study. Our observations and interactions with members of those groups indicated particular vulnerabilities afflicting them. For example, the Baiga, ChikBaraik, Chero, Ho, Mal Pahariya, and Sauriya Pahariya — groups that have migrated from Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh — seemed to have witnessed a major change in their occupational patterns. While elsewhere the groups tended to depend more on cultivation — both settled and shift — the loss of their natural setting on one hand and numerical weakness on the other left them

socially and economically alienated from their cultural traits, forcing them to lose their language, custom, social bonds and economic choices.

The vicious cycle of political-economic deprivation and social alienation continues to keep the Adivasis subjugated to the ruling modern. The politics of dominance, economics of immediate gain, and social outlook of separateness have charted out for the Adivasis as well as others a very different path. Getting rid of the philosophically confused outlook of seeing the Adivasis as mere recipients of largesse may not be very easy. The very origin of this outlook, namely narrow, short sighted self-interest, appears as a huge barrier to embracing the Adivasis as co-citizens from whom others can learn and ‘benefit.’ Instead of seeing the Adivasis as “problems,” the entire country can be hugely benefitted by seeing the Adivasis as co-citizens and drawing on their historically nurtured cultural values, which often uphold some of the best principles of democracy and those of justice, fairness, and equality. By ensuring their rights to live their own lives, the country can guarantee itself a flourishing democracy.



Working together: Munda couple thatching roof

2. The Demand for Education

“Wisdom advises us that while a horse can be taken to a river, it cannot be made to drink unless it wishes to. For decades, this has been used as a handy idiom to describe the ‘innate’ reluctance of Adivasi children to be educated. However, a horse can also be conditioned not to drink, despite considerable thirst, if it has been shamed and punished from birth for every attempt at quenching its thirst. And if the horse is too weak to walk, or the river too far, then the debate is resolved before the matter of drinking even arises. Years of fieldwork in the area of public education has shown us that the latter is a rather more apt metaphor for the education of marginalised children, than simple ‘reluctance’ to drink. The causality behind low educational achievement of Adivasi children, in particular, is complex, cyclical, and multi-variate, ranging from intergenerational malnourishment and poverty, shaming in the classroom, identity-based bullying by peers, to inadequacy of local infrastructure. In what ways can we do better? This chapter attempts to answer that question.

2.1 Introduction

The middle of the day in June in this part of the world, where the thermometer records a harsh temperature of 40 degrees Celsius, is possibly not the best time to study. Adding to this hostile weather condition is the lack of electricity in the households of this neighbourhood. Despite this, the teenager Sonamuni Tudu was memorising with perseverance a list of suggested answers provided by her private tutor in the form of photocopies of his handwritten notes. It was important for her to pass the higher secondary examination, which requires her to memorise the note on the relevance of *Annadamangal*, an 18th-century narrative poem in Bangla. When I asked her why she was focusing on these ‘notes,’ she said that notes were very useful, as they prepared her to answer specific questions without having to read the primary text. “Learning the answer by rote is not very easy, I cannot remember them, that is why I have to read so much,” she said coyly.

It should be noted here that despite being a resident of West Bengal, where Bangla is one of the official languages and the chief medium of textbooks and instruction, Bangla is not Sonamuni Tudu's first language. At home, she speaks Santali, and the Bangla that her family is familiar with is a colloquial variant and not the academically standardised version of her schoolbooks and notes. Nonetheless, Sonamuni is fortunate to attend school. Her parents too had attended school — unlike some of their peers — but could not pursue their studies further due to a host of reasons (which have much contemporary relevance, and we will focus on them in this chapter). But, despite a weak household economy, after Sonamuni completed studies at the local primary school, they decided to send her to a school with residential facilities for high school education. The school was in Kanthi (Contai) town of East Medinipur, about 100 kilometers away from their village in the Nayagram block of West Medinipur (now Jhargram) district. Had she stayed at home, she would have had to walk an hour and a half to reach the nearest upper primary school, across a thickly forested landscape often visited by wild elephants. Moreover, her parents had learnt from their own sources that the quality of education in the neighbouring school was not up to the mark. Besides, they knew some people who had already sent their children to the school at Kanthi, and had perceived the school to be good in terms of imparting education. The financial



Learning gives way to earning: Kharia Savar children gathering firewood

implication of sending Sonamuni to the Kanthi school was too high for her parents to bear but their insistent desire to educate their daughter won the battle and they arrived at a compromise by making a departure in their employment pattern: so far they had been working on their own land but they now joined day-labourers to earn additional money to invest in Sonamuni's education and secure for her a life better than the one they had been living.

Although the connection between acquiring education and a good life is not free of contentions—at least some of the participants in the preparatory workshops of the present work contended this aspect rather vociferously—almost all the parents we had had the opportunity to interact with during the study believed that it was lack of education that had made their prospects of life bleak. “Despite having eyes we are blind,” was one of the most common refrains among the study participants. As one of Sonamuni's neighbours pointed out, “We cannot read or write, we cannot understand what is happening around us. Those who have acquired education rule over us – we are obliged to follow what they ask us to do.” This understanding of education and power, constructed through everyday life-experiences, has been reflected in the enrolment pattern. Of the 661 children in the 6–14 age group found in the surveyed households, only a little above one percent (9 in number) were found to have never been enrolled in a school. Nearly all the parents wanted their children to attend the school and acquire ‘at least some education,’ as they put it. However, notwithstanding a higher degree of aspiration for acquiring education by their children, for many of them, the gap between dream and reality appears insurmountable.

Let us return to Sonamuni's neighbour. Despite having the same area of cultivable land and bovine assets as Sonamuni's parents, children of this household could hardly learn the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic skills at school. This was the conversation we had with him –

- Why do you think your children are falling behind?
- They [Sonamuni's parents] were somewhat educated, and could help Sonamuni with her studies. We are illiterate, we could not do so.
- Didn't your children go to school?
- Of course they did. But they didn't learn anything in school.
- Why not?
- Can't say. Perhaps they were not intelligent enough to follow the lessons, or perhaps the teachers didn't care to teach our children. Didn't I say that despite having eyes we are blind? How can we know?

Responses of the parents of other ethnic backgrounds — Lodha and Mahali, who

co-habited with the Santals—were full of similar agonising experiences. Since Santals were somewhat well-to-do and had some voice in the social dynamics, their children received a small degree of attention from the teachers but as parents from the other communities pointed out, “*Our* children were never welcome in the school.” They stressed the word ‘our’ perhaps to distinguish their identity as Adivasi from that of the teachers from non-tribal backgrounds. “Children attended school, sat in the corners, took the Mid-day Meal, and returned. How could they learn anything, if the teachers don’t want them to learn? And unlike some other villages, there is no private tutor around here.” While association with advantaged peoples in the village has provided the disadvantaged Lodha or Mahali people with some idea about the different elements of the delivery of education, such as the artificially-created unavoidability of private tuition (“Had we had the money we would have sent our children to private tutors”), in other areas people were found to be completely ignorant of the very concept of education. In a Purulia village inhabited by Savar people, we did not find a single child who could read or write, even though at the time of the study some of them were attending upper primary schools. Their books and notebooks showed no signs of having been used. When asked about their education, parents said that the fact that their children attend school itself is a blessing of God. “We never dreamt of going to a school, we don’t even know what the interior of a school looks like; they are fortunate to be able to attend school. What more is written in their fate? They won’t become teachers or officers, they will all become like us. That they attend school will to some extent open their eyes to the world, nothing more.” This is certainly true; merely by attending school, children of this hamlet have learnt how terribly inimical the outside world is for them. Neither the teachers nor their fellow students talk to them, but often indirectly make them remember their British-ascribed identity as ‘habitually’ criminal (“*Ura chor bothe*”: “They are burglars”). Their eyes have opened, but only to see a world where the place reserved for them has nothing to do with letters and numbers, exercises and learning lessons, imagination and achievement.

The relationship between the school and children, however, was not found to be as inimical everywhere as in this village. There were schools where teachers were found to pay attention to children irrespective of their community background. In fact, the difference in or commonality of communitarian identities did not demonstrate similar patterns in the functionality of schools. While in some villages the commonness of identity between the teacher and students was found to be favourable for students, in some cases it was not. For example, in a Purulia village a teacher of tribal background was reportedly so involved in several other income generating works that he could hardly attend school but managed

to resist any charges of dereliction of duties by using his political connections. On the other hand, non-tribal teachers were found to be highly enthusiastic about running schools for the benefit of all students, including marginalised tribal ones. For example, in a North Bengal village, a Bangla-speaking teacher had learnt the Rava language of his students, in order to interact with those in his class who did not speak Bangla. This has resulted in several Rava children becoming much more engaged in the classroom (because they can now follow what is being taught and have a personal relationship with their teacher), and therefore graduating from primary to high school without having to rely upon regurgitating “notes” provided by private tutors. This, however, is an exception, and such cases are far fewer than currently needed. As a general case, educational facilities for Adivasi children are yet to reach them as meaningfully as to help them acquire even the basic verbal and numerical skills, let alone opening up for them new horizons of higher education. As to what causes such deplorable conditions calls for an in-depth analysis of the complex connections.

2.2 Educational Base: Literacy Rate and Level of Education Achieved

As in the case of Sonamuni, parental background plays a crucial role in children’s education. As a general pattern, children of parents with some educational achievement—even if they are ‘mere’ literates—significantly tend to attend school and, in turn, acquire education. Literacy may certainly have varying degrees of effect at the individual level – some can take it forward to enhance their abilities to a much further extent, while some others may even fail to realise this achievement in its definitional content, that is, the ability to read, write and solve simple arithmetic problems. Nevertheless, at the societal level, expansion of literacy rates bears much larger value as it demonstrates the extent of educational services available in society, and the quality of assertion on education among the population therein. Unfortunate as it is, West Bengal, despite showing a higher rate of literacy for the population as a whole (76 percent as against the national average of 74 percent according to the 2011 Census) has historically been showing slower progress in terms of the Adivasi literacy rate. In 1961 the literacy rates among the Adivasis of India and West Bengal were nine percent and seven percent respectively; they rose to 59 percent and 58 percent in 2011 (see Table 2.1). Also, the difference between the overall literacy rate and the rate of literacy among the Adivasis is higher in West Bengal (18 percentage point) than that of the all-India average (15 percentage point) (see Table A.S.2.1 in Appendix II). It is true that the national level figures of the Adivasi literacy rate have found strong support from some states, especially in the north-eastern part of the country, and West Bengal’s corresponding achievement appears better when compared with the central Indian states – the

Adivasi heartland. The comparative solace cannot, however, compensate the absolute loss; it is hard to explain the state's failure to provide the Adivasis the basic right to being literate.

Table 2.1. Adivasi literacy rates (in percent) in India and West Bengal (1961–2011)

Year	India				West Bengal			
	Female	Male	All	Gender gap	Female	Male	All	Gender gap
1961	3.2	13.8	8.5	10.7	1.8	11.2	6.6	9.4
1971	4.9	17.6	11.3	12.8	3.1	14.5	8.9	11.4
1981	8.0	24.5	16.4	16.5	5.0	21.2	13.2	16.2
1991	18.2	40.7	29.6	22.5	15.0	40.1	27.8	25.1
2001	34.8	59.2	47.1	24.4	29.2	57.4	43.4	28.2
2011	49.4	68.5	59.0	19.2	47.7	68.2	57.9	20.5

Source: Census of India, various years

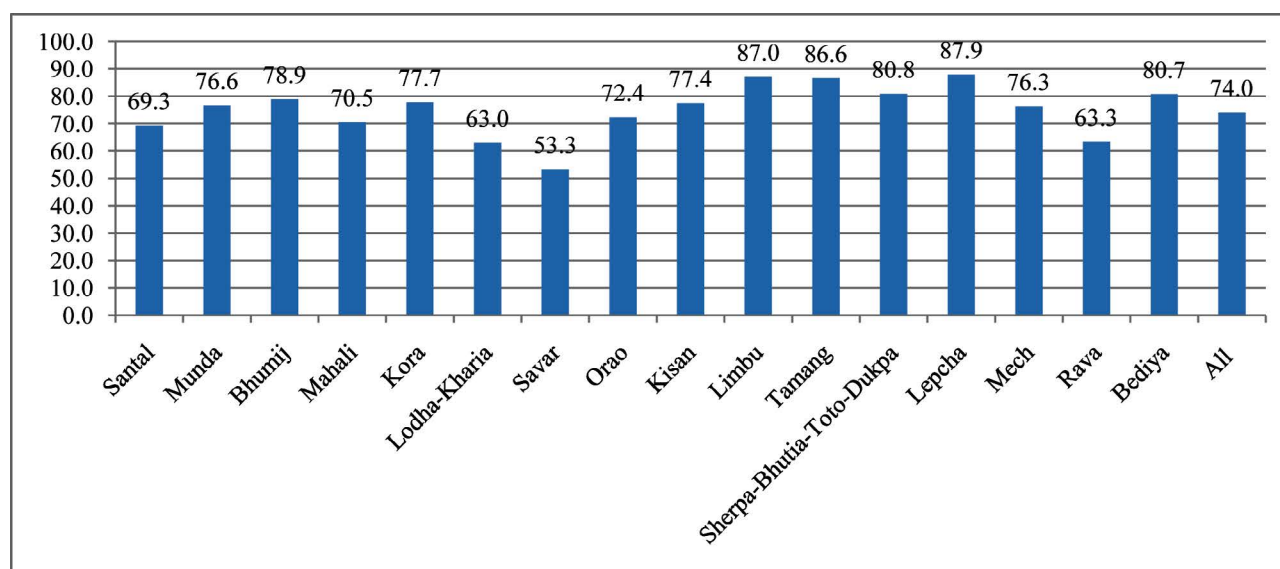
The generally sluggish progress in expanding literacy rates has particular bearing on women, and, in turn, takes a huge toll by thrusting cumulative illiteracy upon the society as a whole. According to the Census of India 2011, the literacy rate of the Adivasi women is too far in arrears – with 51 percent at the all-India level and 52 percent in West Bengal being illiterate. Further, while at the all-India level the Adivasi women lag much behind their non-Adivasi counterparts (with a 15 percentage point difference), the West Bengal situation appears to be abysmal (with a 23 percentage point difference). Similarly, the difference in the literacy rate among men and women is no less worrying: the all-India level gender gap in literacy (19 percentage point) is surpassed by West Bengal (with a gap of 21 percentage point) (see Table 2.1).

The deficiency in literacy rates, as in the all-India level, has its community-specific as well as geographical dimensions. For example, the highest literacy rate among the Adivasis of India achieved by the Synteng people of Mizoram (100%) contrasts sharply with the lowest level of corresponding achievement by the Sulung Bangni people of Arunachal Pradesh (18%). Similarly, there is a huge difference between the highest (Lakshadweep and Mizoram at 92%) and lowest (Andaman and Nicobar Islands at 31%) achievers of literacy rates among the Adivasis of India. The differences percolate down well to the state level: Kolkata (77%) and Uttar Dinajpur (36%) being at the top and bottom places of the list of the Adivasi literacy rate in West Bengal. The average gender gap in literacy among Adivasis (21 percentage point) finds a district wise skewed pattern (Purulia with 28 percentage point and Kolkata with 10 percentage point having the widest and narrowest gaps). Similarly, the largest and smallest differences between the average literacy rate and the Adivasi literacy rate (23

percentage point in Birbhum and four percent point in Kolkata) add further to the unevenness in the pattern of literacy rates among the Adivasis (see Table A.S.2.2 in Appendix II).¹

Community wise, the Magh people top the list with an 88 percent literacy rate while the Gorait people are placed at the bottom with a literacy rate as low as 32 percent. When divided into two groups according to their literacy rates, 23 and 18 groups fall respectively above and below the state average of the Adivasi literacy rate (58%) (see Table A.S.2.3 in Appendix II). Most of the 23 groups above the state average form a small part of the Adivasi population, and are found mainly in the northern part of the state. Among the other numerically significant groups, with lower than the average level of literacy rates, are those that are spread mostly across southern Bengal. Similarly, while in the Census decade 2001–11 there has been an overall increase in the average literacy rate of the state, the community specific variations appear to be quite wide. Take for example the case of the Chakmas and Khond, who have a negative rate of progress in literacy (-8.6 percentage point and -3.4 percentage point respectively) while some communities (Nagesia, Birjia) have registered a 29 percentage point decadal increase in literacy.

Figure 2.1. Literacy rates (in percent) among different Adivasi communities of West Bengal as found by the present survey (age seven years or above; N=4027)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

¹ The decadal changes in literacy rates of the Adivasis in districts point to the continued disadvantage of some areas in this matter (see Table A.S.2.2 in Appendix II).

The field level data collected in 2018, eight years since the last Census (2011) also reinforces the skewed pattern of literacy achievement of the Adivasis. Of a total 4027 population above seven years of age, 74 percent were found to be literate (of which 10 percent were just literate, and 64 percent had acquired different levels of education). But the disaggregated figures show a wide inter-community variation (88% among the Lepchas as against 53% among the Savars – see Figure 2.1).

The poor achievement in literacy, aggravated by disproportionate distribution, has affected the overall educational levels of the communities. Of the total 4027 population in the seven years and above age group, only 7.6 percent were found to have acquired secondary level education. Corresponding percentages for higher secondary, graduate and post-graduate levels of educational achievements were 5.9, 1.8, and 0.2 (see Table 2.2). The low achievement has further been aggravated by appallingly low achievement by some communities. For example, only one of the 95 Lodhas (seven years and above) was found to have acquired secondary level education.

Table 2.2. Highest educational level achieved among the Adivasis of West Bengal (seven years or above)

Educational level				
N= 4027	Secondary	Higher secondary	Graduate	Post Graduate
% achieved the level	7.6	5.8	1.8	0.2
Achievement range	1 % (Lodha) to 15% (Mech)	0% (Lodha) to 14% (Limbu)	0% (Lodha) to 5% (Tamang)	0% (13 communities) to 2% (Mech)
Source: Primary Survey, 2018				

2.3 High Aspirations

It was the Mahua (*Basialatifolia*) season. Flowers had matured to wean themselves from the branches, making their human neighbours busy in collecting them. Mahua, despite gradual thinning in the number of trees owing to indiscriminate felling, still forms a major part of Adivasi livelihood, especially in southern West Bengal (more on this in Chapter 4). In Kuni Mahli's organic witticism,

“Like human beings, different Mahua trees are different in nature; their minds run differently. Some shed the flowers at cock-crow [around four in the morning] while others stubbornly hold them until noon. So, we all have to be busy. It's not a matter of joke. You have to collect the Mahua, carry them home, cast them under the sun to dry, organise the previous day's harvest. Lot of work, you see.”

During the Mahua season, every pair of hands matter. Yet, she made sure that her children attended school. Collecting Mahua flowers was much more

enjoyable than attending school and so, every morning, she had to struggle to send the reluctant children to school.

“Why not? We are living our life wretchedly but the children – if God wishes so – can have a better life, if they go to school and learn something...I don’t even dream of them being rich men and women but a little education can give them a less shameful life.”

The verbal articulation of the aspiration, of ensuring a ‘less shameful’ life for their children, has also found an active reflection in the enrolment pattern. Of a total 661 children in the 6–14 age group, 94 percent were found to be enrolled in school.

“I never went to school. When I was a child no girl from our village went to school. Even among the boys, few went to school. Not that there was no school around. But our parents could never imagine that their children could go to school. That children of the Mahlis, Santals, Mundas and Koras would tend the cattle, help parents in domestic and farm works, collect fire-wood or cow dung, Mahua or mushrooms, was taken for granted. Even those who enrolled in the school stopped attending very soon and joined the others.”

Her statement is corroborated by historical data: in 1986–87 the Gross Enrolment Ratio (GER) for the entire population was 70 at the primary level and 41 at the upper primary level in West Bengal.¹ We do not have disaggregated data for the Adivasis, but certainly the ratio must have been below the average (70). Now the GER among the Adivasis has increased to 119 at the primary level and 105 at the upper primary level. When compared to national level figures (105 and 97 respectively at primary and upper primary levels) the GER of the Adivasis in West Bengal appears better.² Again, the dropout rates in West Bengal have decreased from 69, 87, and 93 percent³ at the primary, elementary and secondary levels respectively in 1980–81, to 13, 15, and 37 percent in 2016–17. Though the current rates of dropout among the Adivasis in West Bengal are worse than the national averages (9, 10, and 27 percent)⁴, and summon critical scrutiny of the problems related with graduation (to come to terms with the huge dropout rate at the secondary level and beyond), the underlying message cannot be missed: parents are more keen that their children attend school and, limited as they are, expansion of social policies in the new millennium have had a complementary effect on parental aspirations. Important as they are, the positive impact of the

1 Mehta (1999), p.35

2 NUEPA (2016)

3 GoI (2014), Table 6.3: State-wise Scheduled Tribe Drop-out Rate from Class I-X, 1981-82, p.158

4 DISE (2016)

interventions in education, including Sarva Shiksha Abhiyan, Mid-day Meal, and the Right to Education Act have not worked in isolation; rather, the effectiveness of the educational interventions has been well complemented by other social policies, including the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA), National Food Security Act, and others.

Let us recollect a field interaction to illustrate the connection of educational expansion with that of larger changes in social policy. In a multi-ethnic village in Bankura, as a usual case, Savar people are settled in a hamlet at some distance from the village centre, and it takes the children about a quarter of an hour to reach the school. “Look at the change,” pointed Santi Savar. “Let alone my parents, even I had not attended the school much, went only occasionally. But every child in the hamlet now goes to school.”

This is how the rest of our conversation went –

- What brought about the change?
- It’s the food security. When I was a child I had to go to the forest early morning to collect something – roots, vegetables, fruits. Sometimes we caught fish or collected snails from the streams and lowlands. We never had enough to eat more than once a day. Now things are different. We get the [subsidised] rice. Sometime we find some work [under the NREGA] done by the panchayat [local self-government]. Children still have to work, and they still need to go to the forest, but not like what we had to do.
- But you were supposed to get Mid-day Meals in the school?
- That’s true. It was already in place, so we did attend the school for the meals. It was of course very helpful, as it saved one person’s food at home. But, you know, our household suffered from perennial hunger, and everybody had to work to organise food. Look, if I went to school, I got the food; but then my absence in household works would make a difference to the whole family, so parents asked me to join them.

Not only Santi but many of the inhabitants of the village certified that a combination of factors had brought in a favorable change in the educational environment in the localities, and the rate of enrolment both at primary and upper primary levels was found to be substantial – 94 percent of the children of the 6–14 age group were found to be registered in schools. In other words, the extent of out-of-school children at the primary and the upper primary levels was six percent.

But the high aspiration of parents across communities and districts for their children to acquire education irrespective of whether they were boys or girls

reflected in the enrolment pattern at the elementary level (6–14 group) seemed to have met stumbling blocks as their children grew up. As found during the survey, the extent of potential students not currently enrolled in any institution increased sharply at the higher levels: of the potential students, nearly one third (30.4% to be exact) at secondary and higher secondary levels and almost three fourths (71.1% to be exact) at the under-graduation level were found not to be currently enrolled in any institution. While a small part of them were never enrolled in any school, the majority was actually enrolled in schools but had dropped out at some stage.

Table 2.3. Extent of potential Adivasi students currently not enrolled

Community	Age (6 to 14 years)		Age (15 to 18 years)		Age (19 to 21 years)	
	N	% out of school	N	% out of school	N	% out of school
Santal	180	4.4 (8)	111	36.0 (40)	72	81.9 (59)
Munda	40	2.5 (1)	23	30.4 (7)	18	77.8 (14)
Bhumij	41	2.4 (1)	33	18.2 (6)	16	81.2 (13)
Mahali	30	0.0 (0)	20	35.0 (7)	14	85.7 (12)
Kora	34	5.9 (2)	23	21.7 (5)	12	75.0 (9)
Lodha- kharia	49	22.4 (11)	25	40.0 (10)	15	66.7 (10)
Savar	29	27.6 (8)	11	63.6 (7)	4	75.0 (3)
Orao	49	2.0 (1)	29	20.7 (6)	26	30.8 (8)
Kisan	37	0.0 (0)	19	26.3 (5)	12	91.7 (11)
Limbu	20	5.0 (1)	9	22.2 (2)	4	100.0 (4)
Tamang	32	3.1 (1)	18	16.7 (3)	5	60.0 (3)
Sherpa - Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	22	13.6 (3)	9	44.4 (4)	6	50.0 (3)
Lepcha	34	2.9 (1)	17	52.9 (9)	17	70.6 (12)
Mech	16	0.0 (0)	12	8.3 (1)	8	37.5 (3)
Rava	14	0.0 (0)	13	15.4 (2)	9	44.4 (4)
Bediya	34	8.8 (3)	16	25.0 (4)	8	87.5 (7)
All	661	6.2 (41)	388	30.4 (118)	246	71.1 (175)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

There were several issues that the Adivasis repeatedly encountered in acquiring education, and some of them were found to be more disadvantageous than the others. For example, the appearance of the ominous feature of not being in school among certain groups (Lodha Kheria and Savar) even at the elementary level (see Table 2.3) points towards the persistence of inequality in the delivery of education, not only as an immediate phenomenon but also as an amplifying menace. Chuni Kotal, the first woman graduate from the Lodha community, who, failing to sustain the caste-biased assaults and injuries received from her

teacher committed suicide in 1992 while pursuing her Master's in Anthropology from Vidyasagar University, wrote how poverty and social oppression created for her huge barriers to continue her studies:

“While there was a need of four exercise books, I could manage only few leaves. When I showed the teacher my homework he threw it away...I used to do my arithmetic homework on the floor; but how could I show it to the teacher? He made me stand on the bench. Everybody in the class made fun of me. The teacher often told me that I must not show my face at the school if I could not do my home work properly in the exercise books. How could I do that? I did not have any exercise book... Assuaging hunger was the sole purpose of our life, where would we get money to buy papers and stationaries?”⁵

Chuni has left the world about three decades ago; but her story is alive.

What led to potential students being currently un-enrolled? While some of them, though small in number, had never been enrolled in school, the majority of them had dropped out at various stages. The cases of never-enrolled were related mainly with the difficulty of access to school – parents were not disinterested to send children to school but were waiting for them to grow up ‘enough’ so that they could go to school on their own. In contrast, reasons behind drop outs were related with (a) children not liking the school for several reasons including failing to follow the lessons, not being liked by teachers and fellow students, and the boredom of sitting idle often in a corner of the classroom, (b) school being at a distance and not easily accessible, even for older children, (c) parental inability to bear the expense of education, especially private tuition, and (d) getting engaged in income generating activities or domestic labour, or both. Multifaceted as the problems were, conversations with students and potential students suggested that the discontinuation of school seemed to be drawing more from the state-of-the-art schooling (including functioning of schools, syllabus, linguistic and cultural barriers, and so on) than that of other—poverty-driven—reasons.

Let us illustrate the point with an example.

Rasik Oraon, 18, of a village in Kalchini block of erstwhile Jalpaiguri (present Alipurduar) district, went to the primary school in the village, and the upper primary school a little away from the village. Accessing the school was not a big problem: “I walked every day”, he remembered. But, most of the time there was no teaching in the school. “There were

5 Kotal (No date), Pp58-71

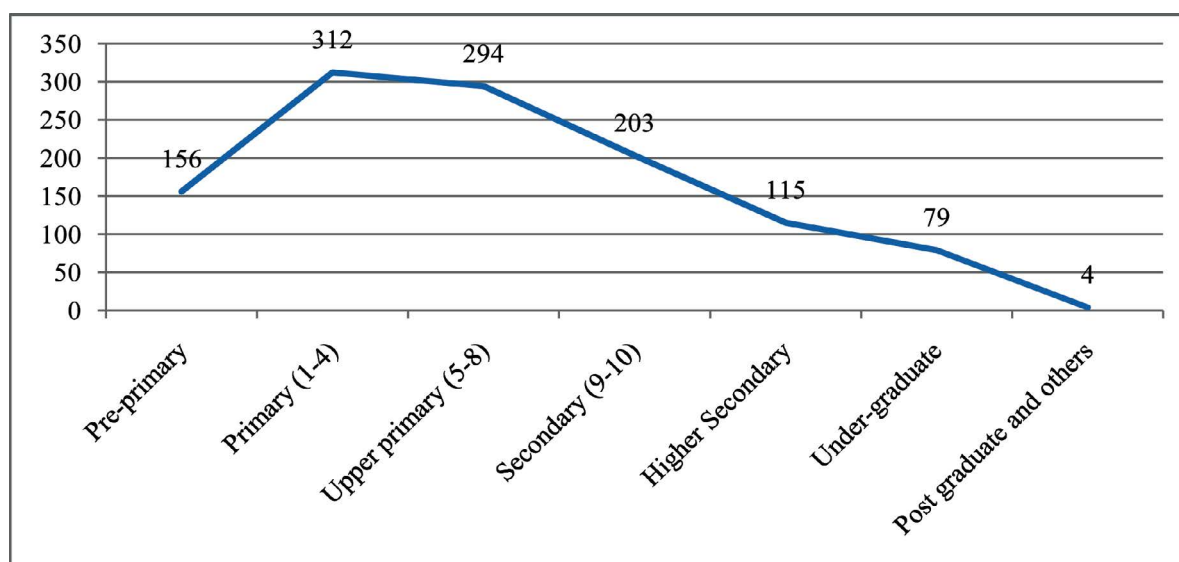
two teachers in primary school, and they would come to school every alternative day (*ek din chhodke aate the*). But we went to school every day. We played there and ate the Mid-day Meal. It was very similar in the upper primary school. We were very happy that we did not have to be in the class. Most of the time we played, sometime we were made to sit in the classroom, but not for long. Teachers gave us some lessons, but we never bothered to learn them. In fact we could not read the lessons,” he laughed. In both the schools the medium of instruction was Hindi but students spoke Sadri (one of the major link language of Jalpaiguri district, inherited by the Adivasi population from their fore-parents immigrated from Chhotanagpur in the colonial period), and teachers were from different linguistic backgrounds – Bangla, Nepali, sometime Sadri too. “Teachers often told us that we were not fit for acquiring education. We believed that our parents were uneducated, their parents were uneducated. And teachers were knowledgeable persons; they knew that we would not be able to learn. So, we did not learn. This way we were graduated to the high school. But there we fell in deep water. It was a co-education school. Every day we, the Adivasi students, were made subject to the teachers’ and fellow non-Adivasi students’ jeering. We could not read and write, could not add or subtract. In almost all the classes we were made to hold our ears and stand up on the bench. We realised that it was impossible to catch up. Had our parents been able to provide private tutors for us we could have learnt something, and might have avoided this tormenting experience. Indeed, one or two of our fellow students, like Tapan Oraon, were fortunate in that matter. Tapan’s father was educated and had a job. He was away but he arranged for Tapan a private tutor. There was no educated person in our village. Tapan’s private tutor came from another village. It was expensive but Tapan’s father could bear the cost. Our parents could not even imagine...In the classes at high school it was particularly scathing when the girl students of the class giggled at our misfortune. Most of us could not survive the assault. Some quit earlier, some later.”

Although Rasik’s story cannot be generalised, the conversations with students across the investigation areas added substance to the experience: the process of schooling had much to do with the students’ dropping out at various levels. Drop out, so to say, is the extreme consequence of the process of alienation of the Adivasi children (among some others) from the education system as a whole. There are many other consequences which affect both the extent and quality of education among the Adivasi children. They include irregular

attendance, inability to learn the lessons taught at school, and most importantly, undoing of the cost-free-ness of education announced in the Right of Children to Free and Compulsory Education Act, 2009 (RTE). Though education at the elementary level has been declared to be delivered by the state free of cost, in practice, each and every parent is required to incur some amount of expense for their children's education. The functioning of the state school system has caused the construction of unreliability in the public psyche regarding the state system's delivery of education. The contradiction between increased aspirations of parents to ensure that their children acquire education and the difficulty of realising the aspiration owing to the weaknesses of the school system has given way to two distinct consequences: (a) parents' increasing reliance on private tuition and private schools – as available and affordable, or (b) students' quitting education mid-way.

We have discussed above students dropping out at different levels. The enrolment pattern of the Adivasi students found by the survey is also witness to the phenomenon. Figure 2.2 shows that the number of currently enrolled students at higher levels of education has declined. The decline was found to be spectacular at the undergraduate and above levels. However, corroborating the drop out pattern—the magnitude of drop-out being relatively less up to the secondary level—the relatively high enrolment up to the secondary level poses a challenge to the popular notion that Adivasis do not want to acquire education and underscores a high demand for education among them.

Figure 2.2. Number of Adivasi students enrolled at various levels (in the surveyed households)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

2.4 Difficult Accessibility

The problem of graduation of the students to higher levels seemed to have a direct linkage with physical accessibility of the institutions. Of the total students enrolled in government institutions (984), parents of only 13 percent (128) could make some or the other arrangement for their children's stay near the institutions. While some, such as Sonamuni's parents, could afford paid accommodation (hostel or rented room), some had found friends or relatives to host their children. In other words, 87 percent of the children enrolled in government institutions had to commute to school. Unfortunate as it was, a substantial proportion of them had to travel more than what could be considered normal. This affected students not only at higher levels but also the pre-primary children, 13 percent of whom were required to travel up to one kilometer or more. Despite the norm mandated by the Right to Education Act about setting up primary schools and upper primary schools within one and three kilometers of habitation, seven and 38 percent of the primary and upper primary children reportedly had to travel distances longer than the norm. Although no standard has been set up for secondary and higher secondary schools, one can reasonably estimate five kilometers to be the maximum distance for students of secondary and higher secondary levels following the Rashtriya Madhyamik Siksha Abhiyan norm. Based on this measurement, the survey found the ratio of secondary and higher secondary school students travelling more than the normal distance to be 26 and 30 percent respectively (Table 2.4). Analyzing the village profiles, we find that the norm for the maximum distance of school was violated in five, 26 and 23 percent study villages for primary, upper primary and secondary schools respectively. In other words, children in these villages had no option but to travel

Table 2.4. Percent distribution of Adivasi students commuting from home according to their covering distances to access the government educational institutions

	Pre-primary [N = 114]	Primary [N = 228]	Upper primary [N = 214]	Secondary [N = 161]	Higher Secondary [N = 86]	Graduation [N = 49]
Within village	86.8	75.4	24.3	12.4	11.6	0.0
Up to 1 km	12.3	17.5	11.2	15.5	8.1	2.0
1 km to 3 km	0.9	5.7	26.6	29.8	33.7	6.1
3 km to 5 km	0.0	0.9	19.6	16.1	16.3	8.2
5 km to 10 km	0.0	0.4	14.4	19.8	19.8	14.3
10 km to 15 km	0.0	0.0	2.8	3.7	4.7	24.5
15 km to 20 km	0.0	0.0	0.9	1.9	4.7	14.3
20 km to 25 km	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	8.2
More than 25 km	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.6	1.2	22.4
Distance more than normal	13.2	7.0	37.7	26.0	30.4	44.9

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

more than the standard norm to access the respective schools. Assuming the norm to be 15 kilometers for the college level students, 45 percent students were found to travel more than the normal distance to access the college.

2.5 High Parental Aspirations and Divided Pattern of Enrolment

Despite the blockade faced by the Adivasi students in pursuing education beyond school, a relatively healthy enrolment up to the secondary level cannot but be considered an encouraging development. The trend draws further life from another crucially important finding of the survey that relates the high aspiration of the parents with a gender-neutral inclination. Among the currently enrolled students from pre-primary to higher secondary level, participation of girls was rather strikingly high. That girls outnumber boys at every level was partly because of the preponderance of girls — unlike non-tribal societies, Adivasis have a more favourable sex ratio among the corresponding population and partly owing to the boys' joining the workforce — through the routes of migration to distant states and other means — at an adolescent age.

Table 2.5. Category wise distribution of enrolled Adivasi students by gender (in percent)

Category	Girls	Boys	Total enrolled children
Pre-primary	50.6 (79)	49.4 (77)	156
Primary	53.5 (167)	46.5 (145)	312
Upper primary	55.1 (162)	44.9 (132)	294
Secondary	51.7 (105)	48.3 (98)	203
Higher Secondary	53.9 (62)	46.1 (53)	115
All	53.2 (575)	46.8 (505)	1080

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

The secular—non-discriminatory—aspiration was also corroborated by the pattern of enrolment in for-profit private institutions.⁶ Despite huge variations in the functioning and the quality of education delivered in the for-profit schools, there has been a growing perception among the parents across the country about the comparative effectiveness of private schools. The perception seemed to have had a percolating effect among the Adivasis. However, our survey found a contrast with the general trend: the trend of enrolment in private schools across the country tends to take a gender-preferential route and boys often outnumber girls in those institutions. Our survey found a pattern that showed

⁶ We have counted here all enrolments outside the government schools as private. However, some of the “private” enrolments were actually dual enrolments – both in private and government.

equal share of girls and boys in the private schools (16% each). One should not, however, take this at face value. The pattern might have been confounded by the smaller number of students enrolled in private schools—there appeared a gradual decline in the share of private schools with the progress of students to higher classes.

Table 2.6. Distribution of enrolment of Adivasi students in government and private schools pre-primary to higher secondary) by gender (in percent)

	Pre-primary		Primary		Upper primary		Secondary		Higher Secondary		Total	
	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.
Girls	77.2 (61)	22.8 (18)	74.9 (125)	25.1 (42)	87.7 (142)	12.3 (20)	90.5 (95)	9.5 (10)	93.5 (58)	6.5 (4)	83.7 (481)	16.3 (94)
Boys	70.1 (54)	29.9 (23)	84.1 (122)	15.9 (23)	84.1 (111)	15.9 (21)	91.8 (90)	8.2 (8)	92.5 (49)	7.5 (4)	84.4 (426)	15.6 (79)
All	73.7 (115)	26.3 (41)	79.2 (247)	20.8 (65)	86.1 (253)	13.9 (41)	91.1 (185)	8.9 (18)	93.0 (107)	7.0 (8)	84.0 (907)	16.0 (173)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

The enrolment pattern, nevertheless, shows substantial spatial and inter-community variations. The spatial distribution indicated a very substantial reliance on private schools in Darjeeling district at all levels (51%), followed by Jalpaiguri (24%). A higher extent of enrolment in private schools has been a phenomenon in Darjeeling district. A Pratichi study carried out in 2002–03 pointed towards this aspect.⁷ Yet, despite causal connections being unclear in some other districts, the share of private enrolment at the primary level in Purulia (16%), North 24 Parganas (10%) and Paschim Medinipur (nine percent) indicate a growing expansion of the private education market (see Table 2.7).

Similarly, we have found a widely varying pattern of enrolment among the different communities. Most of the Adivasi groups living in the northern parts of the state (Lepcha, Tamang, Limbu, Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa, Rava, Mech, and Oraon) were more likely to avail private school education for their children than what was found among the Adivasis of southern Bengal. Interestingly, however, the inclination to enroll children in private schools was found to have gained ground among some of the Adivasi groups of southern Bengal too (see Table 2.8).

⁷ See Pratichi Research Team (2004).

Table 2.7. Distribution of enrolled Adivasi students in government and private schools (pre-primary to higher secondary) by district (in percent)

District	Pre-primary		Primary		Upper primary		Secondary		Higher Secondary		Total	
	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.
Darjeeling	21.4 (3)	78.6 (11)	40.4 (19)	59.6 (28)	50.0 (28)	50.0 (28)	65.6 (21)	34.4 (11)	66.7 (10)	33.3 (5)	49.4 (81)	50.6 (83)
Jalpaiguri	29.6 (8)	70.4 (19)	64.2 (34)	35.8 (19)	79.7 (47)	20.3 (12)	90.9 (50)	9.1(5)	95.5 (42)	4.5 (2)	76.1 (181)	23.9 (57)
Malda	82.4 (14)	17.6 (3)	92.9 (26)	7.1 (2)	100.0 (31)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (11)	0.0 (0)	85.7 (6)	14.3 (1)	93.6 (88)	6.4 (6)
Birbhum	100.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	91.7 (11)	8.3 (1)	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	97.5 (39)	2.5 (1)
Bardhaman	92.9 (13)	7.1 (1)	100.0 (20)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (16)	0.0 (0)	93.8 (15)	6.2 (1)	100.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	97.1 (68)	2.9 (2)
North 24 Parganas	100.0 (14)	0.0 (0)	89.7 (26)	10.3 (3)	100.0 (24)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (16)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (7)	0.0 (0)	96.7 (87)	3.3 (3)
Hooghly	75.0 (3)	25.0 (1)	100.0 (12)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (10)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (8)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	97.3 (36)	2.7 (1)
Bankura	66.7 (4)	33.3 (2)	92.3 (12)	7.7 (1)	100.0 (19)	0.0 (0)	92.3 (12)	7.7 (1)	100.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	92.7 (51)	7.3 (4)
Purulia	94.1 (16)	5.9 (1)	84.4 (27)	15.6 (5)	100.0 (33)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (23)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (9)	0.0 (0)	94.7 (108)	5.3 (6)
Paschim Medinipur	89.3 (25)	10.7 (3)	90.9 (60)	9.1 (6)	97.5 (39)	2.5 (1)	100.0 (26)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (18)	0.0 (0)	94.4 (168)	5.6 (10)
All	73.7 (115)	26.3 (41)	79.2 (247)	20.8 (65)	86.1 (253)	13.9 (41)	91.1 (185)	8.9 (18)	93.0 (107)	7.0 (8)	84.0 (907)	16.0 (173)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

**Table 2.8. Distribution of enrolled Adivasi students in government and private schools
(pre-primary to higher secondary) by community (in percent)**

Community	Pre-primary		Primary		Upper primary		Secondary		Higher secondary		Total	
	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.	Govt.	Pvt.
Santal	91.1 (51)	8.9 (5)	91.0 (81)	9.0 (8)	100.0 (83)	0.0 (0)	96.6 (57)	3.4 (2)	95.2 (20)	4.8 (1)	94.8 (292)	5.2 (16)
Munda	83.3 (10)	16.7 (2)	88.0 (22)	12.0 (3)	93.3 (14)	6.7 (1)	100.0 (12)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	91.4 (64)	8.6 (6)
Bhumij	83.3 (5)	16.7 (1)	100.0 (16)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (25)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (13)	0.0 (0)	98.7 (74)	1.3 (1)
Mahali	100.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (10)	0.0 (0)	95.0 (19)	5.0 (1)	100.0 (10)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (5)	0.0 (0)	98.0 (48)	2.0 (1)
Kora	72.7 (8)	27.3 (3)	81.2 (13)	18.8 (3)	100.0 (16)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (10)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	89.8 (53)	10.2 (6)
Lodha-Kharua	75.0 (6)	25.0 (2)	86.4 (19)	13.6 (3)	92.3 (12)	7.7 (1)	87.5 (14)	12.5 (2)	75.0 (3)	25.0 (1)	85.7 (54)	14.3 (9)
Savar	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	87.5 (14)	12.5 (2)	75.0 (6)	25.0 (2)	100.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (2)	82.4 (28)	17.6 (6)
Oraon	63.6 (7)	36.4 (4)	57.7 (15)	42.3 (11)	63.6 (14)	36.4 (8)	90.5 (19)	9.5 (2)	100.0 (14)	0.0 (0)	73.4 (69)	26.6 (25)
Kisan	66.7 (6)	33.3 (3)	95.0 (19)	5.0 (1)	100.0 (17)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	93.1 (54)	6.9 (4)
Limbu	25.0 (1)	75.0 (3)	30.0 (3)	70.0 (7)	40.0 (2)	60.0 (3)	75.0 (6)	25.0 (2)	100.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	48.3 (14)	51.7 (15)
Tamang	33.3 (1)	66.7 (2)	33.3 (4)	66.7 (8)	43.8 (7)	56.2 (9)	33.3 (3)	66.7 (6)	77.8 (7)	22.2 (2)	44.9 (22)	55.1 (27)
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dupka	0.0 (0)	100.0 (2)	60.0 (3)	40.0 (2)	63.6 (7)	36.4 (4)	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	75.0 (3)	25.0 (1)	67.9 (19)	32.1 (9)
Lepcha	0.0 (0)	100.0 (5)	33.3 (5)	66.7 (10)	47.1 (8)	52.9 (9)	42.9 (3)	57.1 (4)	66.7 (2)	33.3 (1)	38.3 (18)	61.7 (29)
Mech	25.0 (2)	75.0 (6)	66.7 (4)	33.3 (2)	85.7 (6)	14.3 (1)	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	100 (7)	0 (0)	73.5 (25)	26.5 (9)
Rava	0.0 (0)	100.0 (3)	66.7 (4)	33.3 (2)	71.4 (5)	28.6 (2)	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (9)	0.0 (0)	77.4 (24)	22.6 (7)
Bediya	100.0 (8)	0.0 (0)	83.3 (15)	16.7 (3)	100.0 (12)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (10)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	94.2 (49)	5.8 (3)
All	73.7 (115)	26.3 (41)	79.2 (247)	20.8 (65)	86.1 (253)	13.9 (41)	91.1 (185)	8.9 (18)	93.0 (107)	7.0 (8)	84.0 (907)	16.0 (173)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

2.6 Shadow Education and Educational Divide

The rain showed no promise of ceasing. Apprehensive of the primary school having closed — or not having opened at all — we hesitantly headed towards it. We had heard from the parents about the school and its teachers. They were especially laudatory of the headmaster, who “...despite not being an Adivasi, was very caring about our children. He makes sure that every child comes to school every day and learns the lessons... He has changed the school completely. Even a few years ago, teachers came to school as and when they wished to. But now the school functions really well.” Yet, the combined effect of our experiences in some other villages, where we had found the schools in a semi-functional state even on climatically or otherwise normal days, and the incessancy of the rain made us somewhat apprehensive. When we reached, however, classrooms full of actively engaged students disproved our doubt.

The school, located at the corner of the village — a place about 10 kilometers away from Jhargram town — was a sight to behold. Beautifully gardenized, walls full of pictures and writings by the children, clean toilets, neatly organised classrooms, the school would immediately attract the attention of even the most indifferent passerby. The most arresting surprise were the children, all of whom, unlike many others like Rasik, mentioned earlier, could read, write, and solve simple arithmetic problems. And, yet, the teacher was perceptibly upset to point out the growing craze for private tuition.

Despite all our [teachers’] efforts and children’s reasonably satisfactory learning achievements made possible through the efforts, sections of the parents are madly inclined toward private tuition for their children. Some of the parents are so poor that they cannot even arrange for meals to fill the bellies of the family members, and yet they are ready to pay the private tutors.... No parent would accuse us of negligence, they are very happy about the school, and are always ready to help us in running the school effectively. But the problem lies elsewhere; everybody is running in a competitive mode and believes that supplementary teaching outside school would help their child raise the learning achievement to a competitive level – on a par with the non-tribal children....I have been approached by many parents to give their children private tuition. I refused. So they have found some educated youths from the surrounding areas. Even parents have to pawn their belongings – utensils, ornaments – to pay for private tuitions.

Nevertheless, unlike what we learnt in this village, private tuition was not found to be a “perceived necessity” everywhere. Rather, we came across

several cases in which the learning outcome of the Adivasi children was contingent to their parents' ability to arrange for supplementary teaching for their children – by private tutors or others like kin and relatives. It was, however, not easy to find such “resuscitation”: most of the households did not have persons to help children in studies, in many areas there were no private tutors available, and in many cases parents simply could not afford the fees. An amalgamation of the factors restricted the degree of private tuition among the surveyed children to 46 percent – much lower than the average trend of West Bengal.

Table 2.9. Proportion of Adivasi students at different levels receiving private tuition (in percent)

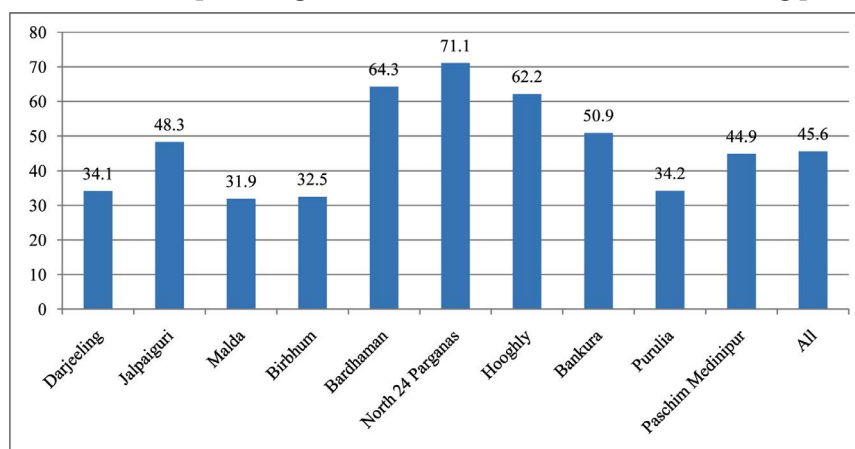
Grades	Students receiving private tuition			Total students
	Girls	Boys	All	
Pre-primary	21.5 (17)	22.1 (17)	21.8 (34)	156
Primary	49.1 (82)	51.0 (74)	50.0 (156)	312
Upper primary	49.4 (80)	48.5 (64)	49.0(144)	294
Secondary	54.3 (57)	52.0 (51)	53.2 (108)	203
Higher Secondary	51.6 (32)	35.8 (19)	44.3 (51)	115
All	46.6 (268)	44.6 (225)	45.6 (493)	1080

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Nevertheless, the extent of private tuition was found to have spatial and community wise variations. As can be seen from Figure 2.3, the extent of private tuition among students of the districts in south Bengal, especially the rice belt of Hooghly, Bardhaman, Paschim Medinipur, and North 24 Parganas, was much higher than the other districts. In all likelihood, the phenomenon was influenced more by the general educational environment in these areas.

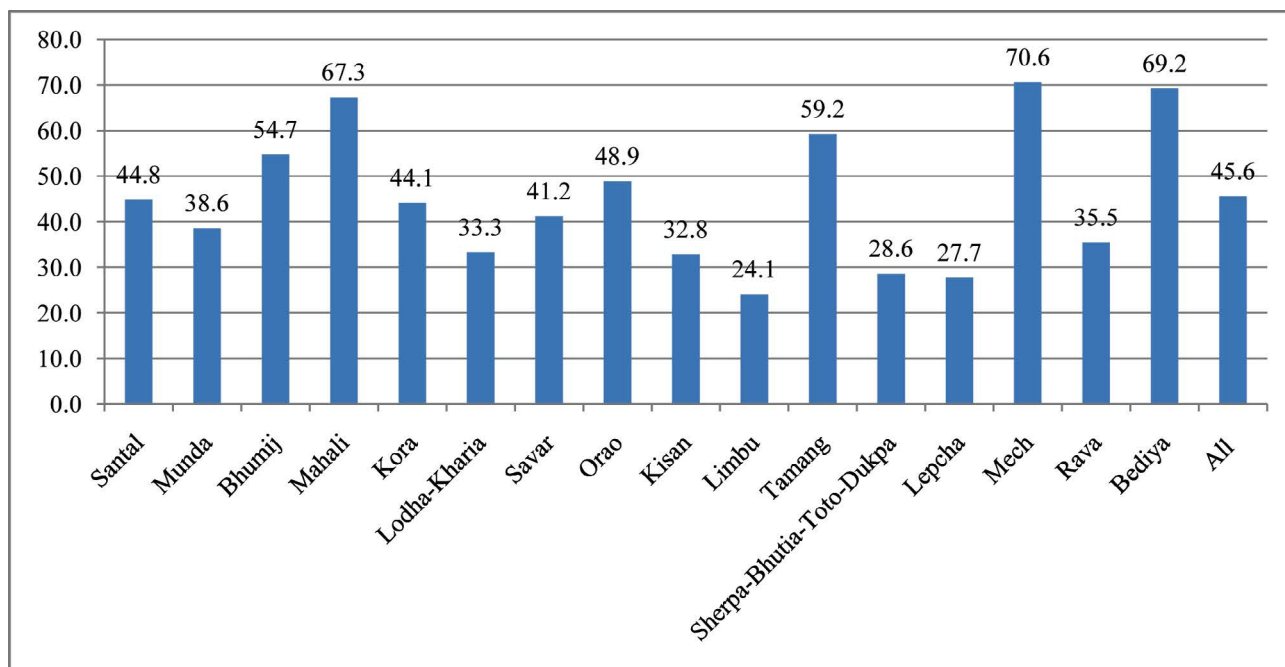
Figure 2.3. District wise percentage distribution of Adivasi students receiving private tuition



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Similarly, the variations in the extent of private tuitions were found to be spread across the communities (see Figure 2.4). The district wise and community overall variation in the share of students receiving private tuitions (taking all students into account) showed some more variations when disaggregated according to students' grades (see Table A.2.1 and Table A.2.2 in Appendix III).

Figure 2.4. Community wise percentage distribution of Adivasi students receiving private tuition



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Aside from the spatial and societal level variations in the trend of private tuitions, the survey found another crucial distinction: the extent of private tuitions was much higher among the students of private schools than that of government schools, especially up to the upper primary level, where the share of enrolment in private schools was considerable. Table 2.10 of course shows a declining trend of private tuitions at the secondary and higher secondary levels, but this might have been confounded by the thinness of the corresponding number of total students studying at these levels in private schools (only 18 at the secondary and eight at the higher secondary levels). Among the students of government schools upto the secondary level, however, there is a steady increase in the trend of private tuition. .

Table 2.10. Percentage distribution of Adivasi students of government and private schools receiving private tuition

Grades	Students receiving private tuition			Total students
	Govt. School students	Private School students	All	
Pre-primary	14.8 (17)	41.5 (17)	21.8 (34)	156
Primary	47.0 (116)	61.5 (40)	50.0 (156)	312
Upper primary	48.2 (122)	53.7 (22)	49.0(144)	294
Secondary	54.6 (101)	38.9 (7)	53.2 (108)	203
Higher Secondary	45.8 (49)	25.0 (2)	44.3 (51)	115
All	44.7 (405)	50.9 (88)	45.6 (493)	1080

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

As mentioned above, we have found an important distinction between the overall trend of private tuitions in the state and the trend found among the Adivasi students. Aside from the deviation of the extent of private tuition from the overall trend, we found another important distinction in its pattern. Contrasting the overall proclivity of increase of the reliance on private tuition with students graduating to higher levels, the present study found a lesser extent (44%) of private tuition among higher secondary students than their junior counterparts (50, 49, and 53% at the primary, upper primary, and secondary stages respectively). It was not only connected with the parents' ability to pay, but was also significantly related to the availability of private tutors around the habitations of the students. The combination of the two factors seemed to have resulted in a complex pattern. First, the proportion of students receiving private tuition from teachers (not necessarily from the schools they were studying in) remained more or less the same at all levels from the primary to the higher secondary (the figure veered around 21 to 26 percent, except for the pre-primary students). But in cases of receiving private tuitions from Adivasi and non-Adivasi youths, two contrasting trends were found: in case of the former it took a declining shape (47 percent at the pre-primary level but 10 percent at the higher secondary level) and, in case of the latter, it took a rising form (35 percent at the pre-primary level, but 57 percent at the higher secondary level). The obviousness of these contrasting trends is explained by the restricted spread of educational opportunities (in terms of distance from residence, weak household economy, availability of tutors who speak their language, etc.) among the Adivasis. The educational level of the surveyed 4,027 population (seven years and above) showed 26 percent to be illiterate; of the rest, the distribution

of completion of education levels were as follows: 17 percent upper primary, eight percent secondary, six percent higher secondary and only two percent graduation (see Table A.2.3 in Appendix III for details).

Table 2.11. Percentage distribution of private tutors according to occupation, social identity, and gender

Grades	School/College teacher	Adivasi unemployed youth (girl or boy)	Non-Adivasi unemployed youth (girl or boy)	Others	Total private tutors
Pre-primary	11.8 (4)	47.0 (16)	35.3 (12)	5.9 (2)	34
Primary	21.1 (33)	33.3 (52)	44.9 (70)	0.6 (1)	156
Upper primary	25.0 (36)	27.8 (40)	43.8 (63)	3.5 (5)	144
Secondary	25.9 (28)	20.4 (22)	50.9 (55)	2.8 (3)	108
Higher Secondary	25.5 (13)	9.8 (5)	56.9 (29)	7.8 (4)	51
All	23.1 (114)	27.4 (135)	46.5 (229)	3.0 (15)	493

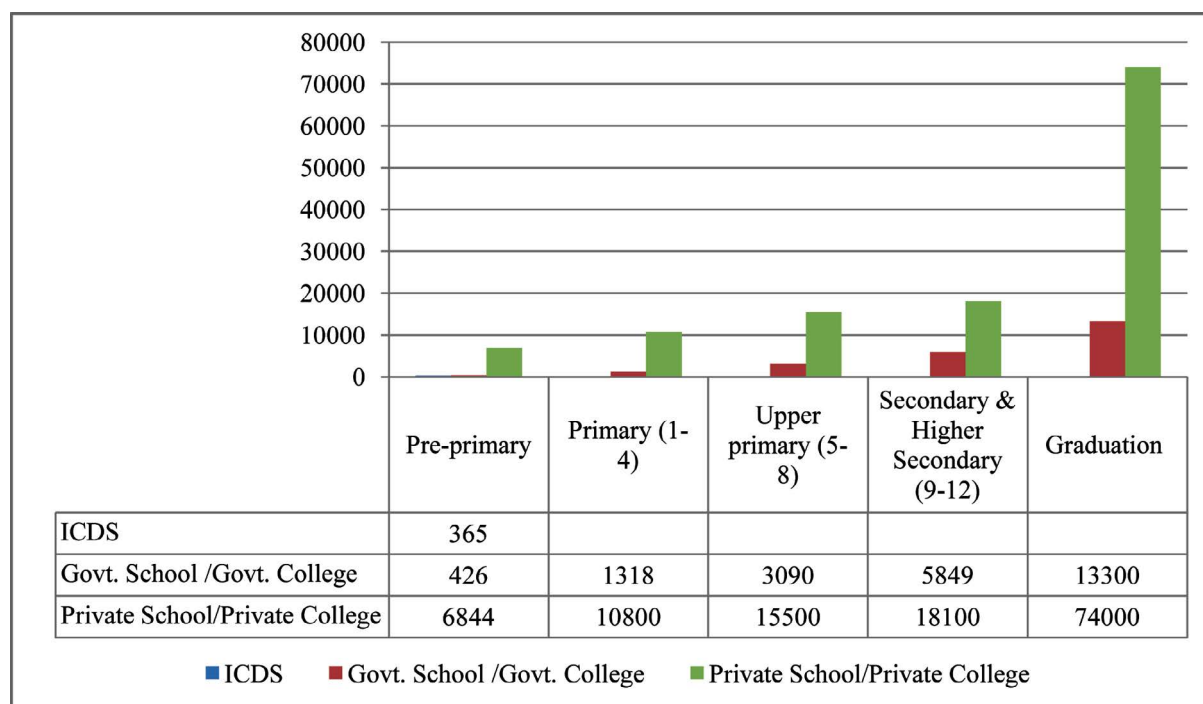
(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

2.7 The Negation of the Idea of Free Education

Switching to labour hiring from cultivating their own lands, or pawning their belongings, or other telling stories of the Adivasi parents' risking their future livelihood options by selling out the animal and other resources to meet the expenditure of their children's education makes the claim of free education blatantly defenseless. Parents of each and every child, primary grade onwards, had to spend some amount of money. Expenses in private schools were naturally much higher than in government schools; yet, that studying in government schools too required substantial amount of money defeated the very idea of public education. The expenses incurred not only on private tuitions but also on some other—equally avoidable—heads, including “school development charges,” transport, stationaries and the like. Given that most of the parents studied under the survey were severely income-poor, their having to bear annual expenses of Rs 1318, Rs 3090, Rs 5849, and Rs 13300 for each student of the primary, the upper primary, the secondary and higher secondary, and the undergraduate levels was nothing short of financially atrocity. The cost of private schooling was manifold higher than the cost of studying in government schools. Yet, the high parental aspiration to acquire education for their progeny defeated the actual and probable hardships of life.

Figure 2.5. Average annual expenditure per Adivasi student according to their status of enrolment (government and private)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

2.8 Social Distance and Positional Objectivity

The social distance between the Adivasis and others, including the government, seemed to have resulted in developing a sense of helplessness among the Adivasis. Not that they did not have any realisation of wrong-doing in the process of delivery of basic services, including education, but they were often found to have precast themselves as passive receivers of either largesse or injustice.

Barring a few exceptions, teachers and parents in the study areas were found to be sharply divided in their perceptions. It was not possible to arrange a meeting between the teachers and parents, but in order to sketch an idea about the dichotomy affecting the educational progress of the students we present here some of the statements made by teachers and parents:

Teacher: Parents are backward in their thinking. They don't value education. They seldom care to send their children to school. Even if they come they don't care for studies. Parents are illiterate and hence they cannot guide their children in their studies. How can they learn if they don't study at home? Also, most of the parents prefer their children to engage in domestic or farm work rather than attending school. Their future is sealed – they are cursed to remain illiterate.

Parent 1: It's not that we don't want our children to attend school. It is true that at certain times we need them at home, but, believe me, such occasions arise only rarely. And most of the times, they do go out for school. It is another matter, however, whether they really go to school or play around, we do not know. We have no time to police them. We don't know what happens in the school.



What does the future hold? Children in a Lodha household

Parent 2: Children do go to school. Teachers also come. But, you know, attending the school alone is not sufficient for acquiring education. Children need to be helped by private tutors. How much can the teacher teach in the classes? Don't you see all those who score better have private tutors? So I have arranged private tuition for my children. It costs Rs 200 a month. Lot of money. But what to do?

Parent 3: Teachers think that our children are stupid. You tell us, can a human being be naturally stupid? But they say so. They say something which our children don't understand. And children are so timid that they don't open their mouths. How would they? They are afraid of the teachers. And they are also very shy= because they cannot speak fluently [the language the teachers speak]. So, somehow they manage to be in school for some years.

Parent 4: The teacher is very good. He comes regularly, and often visits us at our home. Children like him very much for he has picked up bits of our language, and he plays with them. All children in the school can read and write. If only all the teachers were like him!

The different perceptions based on particular positions were not confined only to the student-teacher relationship, but spread across other areas too. For example, only a very small section of parents (4%) complained about the quality of Mid-day Meals served. The perception about the quality of the Mid-day Meal was built upon the populations' status of food security – parents having to face perennial insecurity of food could not judge the quality of the Mid-day Meal. “Whatever the government is giving is good for us,” was the response. Their children, socialised in such an insecure environment, took the meals unquestioningly. In some areas we found that the meal was not served on Saturdays, and yet, people in the area did not find this a violation of the right of the children or a deviation from the norm. “What can we do? It is the government's thing: if it gives us, fine, if not, how can we force them to do so,” was a common response.

Similarly, although sections of Adivasi students at higher levels did not receive the earmarked stipends (9%, as found by our survey) they seemed to have internalised the irregularity. “Sometime we get, often there is much delay in getting it; sometime we do not get it at all,” said Moto Oraon of Alipurduar.

2.9 Linguistic and Cultural Gaps

Apart from the constraints of education related to access, the generally poor functioning of the school system taking particularly inflicting forms in the Adivasi areas, and the problem of affordability of parents to pay for education,

the historically constructed distances of identities between the Adivasis and others, especially those who are at the helm of deciding and implementing the policies, appeared to be a major gradient of the learning achievement of Adivasi children and their graduating to higher grades. Sources of identity distances are contributed by language, culture, and the local moral world – individually as well as in combination. That Sonamuni was struggling to learn by heart the answers to the probable questions was related not only to her not being fully able to grasp the Bangla language, the medium of education, but also to her failure to capture in her imagination the content of the text. It may be worth recollecting a story of a Santal girl, Rupī, who was helped by one of the contributors of this report, X.

Rupī failed in her secondary exam thrice. One of her relatives who knew X requested him to help her so that she could manage to pass the exam. X found that, unlike what her teachers thought and also blatantly told her, Rupī was not short of intelligence. On the contrary, she was quite bright, when she could enter into the subject matter by breaking through the hard outer shell of language – texts were in Bangla, and she had difficulty in grasping the subtlety. Since there was little time at hand, X took a short cut: verbally translating the select texts into Santali. This yielded some dividend and she could gradually manage in her weekly tests taken by X to push herself past the post – the pass mark. It was, however, something more than the language that had a confusing effect on her: it was the conflict between the ideas given in the text and something she had developed in her local moral world. She had to solve a typical problem of arithmetic that involved a milkman mixing water in milk. When she understood the problem in translation she almost fainted with laughter. “What on earth made the milkman mix water in milk? Milk is milk, and water is water; why is one so stupid as to mix water in milk?”

The distinctiveness of the cognitive constructions has its roots in the specific geo-cultural local moral worlds. For example, children of Kol, Mahali or Santal communities of Bardhaman or Hooghly found it less difficult to grasp the essence of the imaginations presented in the texts than their brethren from some other districts faced. The history of Adivasis settling in Bardhaman, Hooghly and some other districts has given them a miniscule minority status – they had migrated in the past to these areas as workers and had been living in Bengali dominated surroundings. They are comfortable enough with the Bangla language to recognise the nature of the content in the text more easily than the others. Similarly, for the Dukpa, Rava, and many others, the content

and language of the texts (Hindi, Bangla, Nepali) appeared to be as foreign as Malayalam to the average mainstream Bangla-speaker. The contents of education are determined mainly by experts whose social roots are hugely different from that of the masses in general and the Adivasis in particular. While the language question has found some space in the discussions on the problems of education of the Adivasis, the question of content has seldom been raised. How can the Dukpa or the Rava or the Lodha or any other child from the margin find her “self” in the written world of the dominant? How can she relate to the moral textual discipline which is completely alien to her living reality?

The problem is political and there is no short cut to an apt solution. It requires a level and quality of discussion that can be possible only by involving the concerned population in a way effective enough for each and every community to find a geo-cultural representation in the same. The consensus on the issue has to take a plural route – not the perceived democratic route of taking the majority decision in consideration.

Let us take the preference of the parents for their children’s medium of education to illustrate why the majority-based decision could be counterproductive. Of the total respondents, 46 percent preferred their mother tongue as the medium of education at the primary level. But, the community wise distribution of the responses pointed towards a wide variation in the responses (see Table 2.12). Interestingly, 26 percent of the parents preferred Bangla as the medium of education despite its not being their mother tongue. On the other hand, 21 percent of the parents preferred English as the medium of education. The preference divide on lines of community shows that most of those who preferred English belonged to the Adivasi communities of North Bengal (Lepcha, Tamang, Limbu, Mech). The preference for Bangla was found mainly among the Adivasis of southern Bengal and only a few from northern Bengal.

What led to the construction of the preference for a language as the medium of education relates to several factors, including the particular socio-economic fabric, past experience and, of course, the status of one’s own educational level. For example, two of the languages, Nepali and Santali, have received the status of national languages (in the VIIIth Schedule of the Constitution), and both languages have been in use, in varied degrees, as mediums of education. And yet, many of the parents speaking these languages preferred English or Bangla to their mother tongue as the medium of education. The preference was not owing to any disloyalty to the mother tongue; it was related mainly to the prospect of pursuing higher education and participation in the job market. For example, parents of Tamang communities told us that while it was easy for the children to pick up lessons in their mother tongue, lack of textbooks in the

Table 2.12. Community wise percentage distribution of Adivasi households having at least one child currently enrolled at ‘pre-primary or primary level (up to std. IV)’ by preference for medium of education

Community	Only mother tongue*	Other than mother tongue					Both mother tongue and other than mother tongue (Bangla/English)	Sample size
		Bangla	Hindi	English	Bangla or Hindi in addition to English	Total		
Santal	52.3 (56)	42.1 (45)	0.0 (0)	0.9 (1)	1.9 (2)	44.9 (48)	2.8 (3)	107
Munda	48.3 (14)	27.6 (8)	10.3 (3)	13.8 (4)	0.0 (0)	51.7 (15)	0.0 (0)	29
Bhumij	100.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	15
Mahali	45.4 (5)	27.3 (3)	27.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	54.6 (6)	0.0 (0)	11
Kora	70.0 (14)	30.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	20
Lodha-Kharia	35.0 (7)	30.0 (6)	20.0 (4)	15.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	65.0 (13)	0.0 (0)	20
Savar	81.3 (13)	12.5 (2)	6.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	18.7 (3)	0.0 (0)	16
Orao	16.7 (5)	13.3 (4)	30.0 (9)	40.0 (12)	0.0 (0)	83.3 (25)	0.0 (0)	30
Kisan	66.7 (14)	23.8 (5)	0.0 (0)	9.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	33.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	21
Limbu	7.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	92.3 (12)	0.0 (0)	92.3 (12)	0.0 (0)	13
Tamang	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (13)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (13)	0.0 (0)	13
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	14.3 (1)	14.3 (1)	28.6 (2)	42.9 (3)	0.0 (0)	85.7 (6)	0.0 (0)	7
Lepcha	8.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	91.7 (11)	0.0 (0)	91.7 (11)	0.0 (0)	12
Mech	7.7 (1)	23.1 (3)	0.0 (0)	69.2 (9)	0.0 (0)	92.3 (12)	0.0 (0)	13
Rava	0.0 (0)	50.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	50.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	6
Bediya	80.0 (12)	20.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	20.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	15
All	45.7 (159)	25.6 (89)	6.3 (22)	21.0 (73)	0.6 (2)	53.4 (186)	0.9 (3)	348

(Figures in parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary survey, 2018

*Note: Considerable numbers of Munda, Bhumij, Mahali, Kora, Lodha, Kharia, Savar, Oraon, Kisan, and Bediya households reported their mother tongue to be Bangla. Similarly, many of the Limbu, Tamang, Sherpa and Bhutia households in general and a substantial number of Lepcha households reported their mother tongue to be Nepali.

Nepali language at higher stages would put an end to their pursuit of higher education. Why, then, should they not begin with English, which would add to their compatibility in the job market? Similarly, a section of Santali speaking parents’ preferring Bangla, or parents of some other communities like Oraon preferring Hindi to their mother language as medium of education followed

the same reasoning for better prospects. Again, it is important to note here that a section of the parents responding to the question on language had not had the opportunity of going to a school and had no socialisation with formal education; hence, their responses involved a higher degree of arbitrariness than that of the others who had had exposure to formal education.

The mixed responses, however, need not lead us to a state of indecisiveness and on to random imposition of a particular policy. Rather, it demands a more scientific, complex, and respectful line of thought so as to develop a system where the educational prospect of each and every child is guaranteed. This invariably involves the children's right to pursue education in a language of their choice – mother tongue or another. Also, it requires that the various mother tongues are fully supported to develop into mediums of educational instruction. With this, policies must take into account the diversity of the local moral world and create enough space in the curriculum and syllabus to accommodate these diversities. While Rupi needs to be acquainted with basic arithmetic, science, literature and other disciplines, educational policy makers and implementers can also learn from her a lesson to keep the milk and water as two distinctly separate elements, and learn that mixing them together is as artificial as immoral.

2.10 Concluding Remarks

Expansion of opportunities of the Adivasis needs to be based on at least two virtues: respect for diversity and equity. The system has to make a departure from considering numerical strength as the basis of democratic functioning; rather, it has to pay much more attention to the numerically “insignificant” groups. This requires major radical changes in, and immediate implementation of, policies.

It must begin with expanding the literacy rate. So far, the approach to arrive at universal literacy has taken the route of depending solely upon the school system to stop further illiteracy on one hand and waiting for natural extinction of the adult illiterates from the population on the other. It demands instead a committed adult literacy drive.

Second, there is an urgent need for substantial reform in distribution of teachers and other resources – the continued trend of lesser number of teachers and inadequate allocation of resources in the Adivasi areas has to stop. Also, it has to be ensured that no child is excluded from the school system and deterred from the opportunity to learn on the grounds of accessibility and poor functioning of schools. The RTE norms must be followed in letter and spirit. The quality of other school programmes like the Mid-day Meal has to be improved a lot.

Third, the general problem of functioning of the school system takes a particularly inflicting form in the Adivasi areas. Regularising teaching and learning and other school activities has to be given utmost priority.

Fourth, the social distance between the teacher and the student—coming from two contrasting cultural backgrounds—tends to affect the learning achievement of children. In most cases teachers tend to nourish in their mind a hypothesis that Adivasi children acquiring education is an utopia, and their subjectivity tends to guide them in proving—rather than invalidating—the hypothesis. Nevertheless, rare as they are, examples of some differently motivated teachers making their respective schools effectively functional underscores the possibility of change. Given the fact that such ‘exclusive’ motivation cannot have a universal manifestation, there is an urgency of systemic reform in governance of the school, teachers’ training and teachers’ appointments. In order to come to terms



Struggling to fair forward: Having fun on their way to school

with the lack of locally compatible resources—teachers sharing the language of the children—the local Adivasi youths engaged in private tutoring may be judiciously involved with the schools in their respective localities.

Fifth, there is need for overhauling the syllabus and curriculum to make them meaningful for Adivasi children. It may involve a complex participatory process to ensure effective representation of all sections of Adivasis—not just the numerically superior or relatively advantaged ones—in the preparation of educational content.

Sixth, the educational achievement of the Adivasis has much to do with proper implementation of educational schemes inter alia other social programmes – like employment, food, forest rights, social security schemes, and such. Proper implementation of the schemes related to social policies, including stipends and other support to students and hostel facilities on the one hand, and other social programmes related to food, employment, and social securities on the other, can have an enabling effect on educational achievement of the Adivasi children.

What is needed first, however, is to recognise the moral demand of accepting the Adivasis as co-citizens. That they are unequal in achievements is not because of intrinsic flaws, but because of the centuries long history of their incessant exploitation and marginalisation. Expansion of educational opportunity is certainly necessary for the well-being of the Adivasi, but it is much more necessary for the well-being of the nation.



Camaraderie in nitpicking: Kharia Savar children in a village



The new comer: A Munda mother and child

3. The Illness of the Health Delivery System

The approach to the problem of healthcare of the Adivasis must take a bio-social route. The problems have multiple connections including public health, poverty, exclusions on the basis of ethnicity and language, illiteracy and poor opportunities of education, poor implementation of the public programmes related to livelihood, nutrition, food security, and employment. Having said that, it must be recognised that as time consuming as the processes of achieving the long term goals may be, they can be achieved through immediate actions guided towards solving some of the easily remediable problems. The centrally important task here is to strengthen the primary healthcare system. There is no reason why patients should need to go to tertiary level hospitals for treatment or child birth, and why it should involve expenditure. The preconceived notion of cultural backwardness must give way to evaluating reality within its objective setting. A culture of companionship based on social morality must be developed rather than being dragged down by a so-called 'professional' receiver-provider relationship. Without recognising the Adivasis as co-citizens, no programme to improve the status of their health, however benevolent the intentions may be, can succeed. Different experiences from home and abroad strengthen this case further.

3.1 Introduction

Sonal Dukpa and Guri Tudu. The two speak completely different languages, belong culturally to two exclusively separate formations and their imagination cannot be in sync with each other's socio-geographical habitations. Yet, there is something that comes from their having to share a common world, a world of suffering – suffering from illnesses that are often remediable yet cause premature deaths, and such premature deaths, without even receiving any treatment, are considered normal.

Sonal and her family inhabited an area called Buxaduar in the hills of Jalpaiguri (now Alipurduar) district which offered no healthcare facility nearby and patients needed to be transported on makeshift ambulances—a cot hung on a bamboo shaft to be carried by two persons—to a health facility, either government or private, in the plains. One afternoon, her three-year-old daughter showed symptoms of diarrhea. “It was already late; night fell, and her father was away at work in Bhutan. Who would take her to the hospital at night? And where would we go? ... She died without even a drop of medicine.”

Unlike Sonal’s case, Guri did not have much locational disadvantage. Her village in the Gajole block of Malda district is not far from the main road having reasonable availability of public transport. There is an Anganwadi centre in the village and a health sub-centre within walking distance and the primary health centre (PHC) is located within five kilometers of the village. Yet, she lost both her twins – one some hours following the delivery and the other after two weeks. There was no delivery facility at the PHC, so her kin took her to the hospital for her delivery. She was also fortunate to have availed of the Nischoy Jaan – a government-run free-of-cost transport arrangement for institutional delivery at a public facility. The cause of death, as she understood from what the caregivers told her at the hospital, was that both children were sick in the womb. It was not



Waiting for drops to fill: In a Malda village

possible to find out the nature of sickness of the babies but there were some clear suggestions from the interactions with Guri and other family members:

- Although she was visited by the local Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHA) and was given the iron and folic acid, she was never physically checked by a doctor during her pregnancy;
- The family was landless and depended fully upon labour hiring. Since there was not much work available in the locality, and her husband could not go away to distant workplaces (Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh) in search of work like fellow villagers leaving the pregnant wife behind, food scarcity went beyond normal levels. This in turn had a damaging effect on the household finance. “Often we went to bed hungry,” said her husband. “We got rice from the ration shop at a cheap rate (Rs 2 per kilogram), but that hardly sustained us for a week in a month.” The local Anganwadi centre was functional but irregularly; and the supplementary nutrition provided for the pregnant women was too inadequate – ‘*nin tiric*’ – this little,” he made a small cup with his fingers.

Both Sonal and Guri accepted the deaths of their children as their destiny. Their faces, while narrating the events, were expressionless. “Perhaps God did not want her to survive,” Sonal’s voice was listless. “What to do? Our life is like this, full of uncertainties. Now we are alive but who knows what will happen a moment later?” Tragically, this normalcy obtains only at the surface level and a look little under the skin lays bare a dramatic contrast. The apparent indifference—conceding to destiny—could not hide the pain: moments after remembering the helplessness in which their children died, their sighs followed by an immediate remedial reaction to conceal the grief unveiled a terribly deep wound inflicted by ‘structural violence’¹ – social, economic, and political arrangements that keep sections of the society perennially subjugated. Sonam and Guri were not just two individuals; they were part of a world constituted of disadvantaged indigenous people who suffer and die of easily remediable diseases. A quantified picture drawn from our survey findings showed 52 deaths (male and female being 26 each) in 1000 households in the year prior to the survey with the average age of death being 57.5 years. While, only four (eight percent) of the reasons of death were attributed to old age, the rest had died of seemingly curable and ordinary diseases, or had committed suicide. Again, nearly one sixth of them did not receive any medical attention before death.

Individual predicaments take the form of *social suffering*, which “results from what political, economic, and institutional power does to people, and reciprocally,

1 Farmer (2014)

from how these forms of power themselves influence responses to social problems.”²

3.2 Inequality in Health Status

Social suffering of the Adivasis begins at birth and it is not a new discovery that survival inequality among Adivasis is atrociously high: disaggregated figures of child mortality reported by various rounds of the National Family Health Survey (NFHS) show a picture of glaring neglect.

Mortality rates among Adivasi children have certainly declined over time: figures of neo-natal mortality rates among the Adivasis of West Bengal and India have reduced from 58 and 49 to 44 and 31 respectively. Corresponding figures for the Infant Mortality Rate (IMR) also show a positive pattern with a decline from 85 and 84 to 46 and 44. A similar trend is seen in the case of under-five Mortality Rates (UMR): it declined from 100 and 127 to 52 and 57 in West Bengal and India respectively.

Table 3.1. Child mortality (per 1000 live births) in West Bengal and India: Adivasi and All

Category→	Adivasi				All			
Residence→	West Bengal		India		West Bengal		India	
Year→	1998-99	2015-16	1998-99	2015-16	1998-99	2015-16	1998-99	2015-16
Indicators↓								
Neonatal Mortality Rate	58.0	44.0	49.0	31.0	34.0	22.0	43.0	30.0
Infant Mortality Rate	85.1	46.1	84.2	44.4	50.9	28.0	43.0	40.7
Under five Mortality Rate	100.1	51.9	126.6	57.2	71.0	32.0	101.0	49.7

Source: NFHS, various years

These progresses over time need to be adequately acknowledged, and more so in order to abolish existing gaps between the achievements of Adivasis and that of the population as a whole, and also between West Bengal and India, as presented in Table 3.1. Despite advancements, however, there remains a large gap between the Adivasis and All, especially in West Bengal. The contrast between Adivasis and All in West Bengal, in fact, is reflective of the Adivasis lagging much behind the non-Adivasis while the degree of inequality in the all-India picture is comparatively less. Further, for both the indicators of neo-natal and infant mortality among the Adivasis, West Bengal has been lagging behind the country average.

² Kleinman, Das and Lock (1997), Pp. ix-xxiv

Similarly, there have been progresses in the nutritional status of the Adivasi children under five, and West Bengal's figures appear to be better than the all-India ones (See Table 3.2).

Table 3.2. Nutritional status of children (<5 years) (in percent)

	Adivasi						All					
	West Bengal			India			West Bengal			India		
	Stunted	Waisted	Underweight	Stunted	Waisted	Underweight	Stunted	Waisted	Underweight	Stunted	Waisted	Underweight
1998-99	46.6	17.7	57.4	52.8	21.8	55.9	41.5	13.6	48.7	45.5	15.5	47.0
2015-16	37.3	27.8	42.0	43.8	27.4	45.3	32.5	20.3	31.5	38.4	21.0	35.7

Nevertheless, when studied in terms of comparative decline in the proportion of undernourishment among Adivasis and All, West Bengal's achievement for the Adivasis is slower than that of the population as a whole.

Looking at the issue of women's health status measured by the Bio Mass Index (BMI), we find the Adivasis lagging much behind the average population, both in West Bengal and at the all-India level. Nevertheless, the rate of decline in the proportion of Adivasi women with low BMI (<18.5) between 1998-99 and 2015-16 was much faster in West Bengal than that of the country as a whole (although mainly because of the very high base in West Bengal). Nevertheless, figures pertaining to the differences in achievement vis-à-vis the Adivasis and the total population continue to remain wider in West Bengal, showing some of the states performing better than West Bengal in this regard.

Table 3.3. BMI of women (15-49 years) <18.5 (in percent)

	West Bengal		India	
	Adivasi	All	Adivasi	All
1998-99	64.2	43.7	46.3	35.8
2015-16	33.2	21.3	31.7	22.9

Source: NFHS, various years

3 A recent survey by Cultural Research Institute on the anthropometric measures of Adivasis in West Bengal reveals that 39, 45, and 19 percent of pre-school Adivasi children were underweight, stunted, and wasted respectively. See GoWB, Tribal Development Department, Cultural Research Institute (2016).

Again, figures related to the proportion of children's and women's conditions among the Adivasis of West Bengal appear to be more unfavorable than that of the Adivasis in the country as a whole. In cases of both children and women, the proportion of Adivasis with anemia is higher in West Bengal than that of the all-India average. Again, the difference between Adivasis and All is also wider in West Bengal than in the country as a whole.

Table 3.4. Percentage of children age group 6-59 months and women (15-49 years) having any anaemia

	Child (6-59 Month)				Women (15-49 years)			
	West Bengal		India		West Bengal		India	
	Adivasi	All	Adivasi	All	Adivasi	All	Adivasi	All
1998-99	94.7	78.3	79.8	74.3	80.6	62.7	64.9	51.8
2015-16	68.1	54.2	63.3	58.5	75.5	62.4	59.9	53.1

Source: NFHS, various years

3.3 Social Determinants of Health

It is now widely acknowledged that health is determined both biologically and socially. The very perception of health and well-being is determined by social factors such as education and provision of medical facilities, among other factors. As Sen points out, “The medically ill-served and substantially illiterate population of Bihar may have a very low perception of illness, but that is no indication that there is little illness to perceive.”⁴ “The poor health of the poor and the marked inequalities between countries,” argues the rightly famous Commission on Social Determinants of Health,

“are caused by the unequal distribution of power, income, goods, and services, globally and nationally, the consequent unfairness in the immediate, visible circumstances of peoples’ lives – their access to health care, schools, and education, their conditions of work and leisure, their homes, communities, towns, or cities – and their chances of leading a flourishing life. This unequal distribution of health-damaging experiences is not in any sense a ‘natural’ phenomenon but is the result of a toxic combination of poor social policies and programmes, unfair economic arrangements, and bad politics.”⁵

Our study, too, found the connection of the poor health status of the Adivasis and opportunity divide in the society—unequal social arrangements—to be painfully strong. We focus on some of them below.

⁴ Sen (2002)

⁵ CSDH (2008)

Poor level of education

Our field level data collected in 2018, seven years since the last Census (2011) reinforces the poor level of literacy achievement of the Adivasis. Of a total 4027 persons above seven years of age, 74 percent were found to be literate (of which 10 percent were just literate, and 64 percent had acquired different levels of education). Again, the disaggregated figures show a wide inter-community variation (88% among the Lepchas as against 53% among the Savars). Poor achievements in literacy aided by disproportionate distribution have had a lasting impact on the overall educational levels of the communities. Of the total 4027 population above seven years of age, only 7.6 percent were found to have acquired secondary level education. Corresponding percentages for the higher secondary, graduate, and post-graduate levels of educational achievement were 5.9, 1.8, and 0.2. Such low achievement has further been aggravated by appallingly lower achievements by some communities. For example, only one of the 95 Lodhas (aged seven years or above) was found to have acquired secondary level education. None of them had been able to go beyond that (the educational problem has been discussed at length in Chapter 2). Severely limited educational opportunities resulting in poor levels of education have a direct bearing upon perceptions of health, health seeking behaviour, and functioning of health facilities. Many of our respondents attributed their constrained access to the health facilities to their inability to read and write and thus not having access to information, and also to the fear of inability to make conversation with doctors and other health personnel.

Physical and social access to health facilities

Analysis of data available for 312 blocks of West Bengal on the basis of distance to nearest PHC to be 10 kilometers or more showed that 28 percent of all villages featured in this category; this figure rose to 44 percent for the villages of the blocks with 25 percent or more Adivasi population. In contrast, the corresponding figure for the blocks with five percent or less Adivasi population appeared to be 1.3 percent.⁶ Our survey, however, found the situation to be a little better – villages from where the nearest PHC was more than 10 kilometers away formed 19 percent of the total. But, in most cases, the PHCs were found to be non-functional or very poorly functional, and the services that are supposed to be provided by the PHCs could only be availed at the Block Primary Health Centre (BPHC) or rural hospitals. In case of the grass root health services (health sub-centres), a little less than half of the villages (43%) had the nearest sub-

6 Calculated from <https://www.jsk.gov.in/content/innerpage/District024.php>, accessed on 23.03.2019

centre more than two kilometres away; and in many areas the sub-centres were reported to be functioning irregularly or poorly. “We do not get any treatment or medicine from them [the sub centres],” was a common complaint we have heard across study areas. Indeed, as an Auxiliary Nursing Midwife (ANM) told us, “our main work is on immunisation, and reproductive health. We cannot be of much help when people seek medical treatment. At most we can refer them to the PHC. But, most of the PHCs have no doctor, and they have to go to the BPHCs, which are quite far away. So, people find it easy to seek treatment from the quacks or traditional healers.”

Table 3.5. Percent distribution of surveyed villages (with complete data) according to their distance to various health facilities

	Within village	Within 2 km	Between 2-5 km	Between 5-10 km	Between 10-15 km	Between 15-25 km	More than 25 km
Sub-Centre	37.0	19.8	35.8	7.4	0.0	0.0	0.0
Primary Health Centre	8.8	15.0	25.0	32.5	12.5	3.8	2.5
Child Delivery Facility	2.6	6.5	18.2	40.3	18.2	10.4	3.9
Public Hospital	0.0	2.4	11.9	26.2	15.5	22.6	21.4
Private Hospital	0.0	2.5	4.9	6.2	14.8	22.2	49.4
Private Doctor (Allopathic)	7.3	9.8	26.8	31.7	11.0	7.3	6.1

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

The problem was echoed by many villagers. Indeed, in some of the villages we found people who were not even aware of the existence of higher levels of health facilities. For example, the West Bengal Government has instituted a super specialty hospital at Kharikamathani in Nayagram, about 70 kilometres from Jhargram. The area has a high concentration of Adivasis, including Lodhas, Santals, Mundas, and Mahlis. During our visit we found the outpatient department (OPD) full of patients but to our surprise, we could identify only few Adivasis among them; and even among those Adivasis hardly any were from the Lodha community – one of the most socio-economically deprived groups. The same afternoon we visited a Lodha village only eight kilometers away from the said hospital. Shockingly, although as the nearest market place Kharikamathani is often visited by the villagers, and the hospital had been running there for about three years prior to our visit, no one we spoke to seemed to have any knowledge of the hospital.

- Where do you seek health treatment from when you fall ill?
- Sometimes we do not do anything. Sometimes we approach *Madhu daktar* [a quack].

- Why don't you go to the hospital?
- Who will accompany us? We do not know where to go; even if we go, will the doctor treat us? We are Lodhas, and people at Kharaikamathani see us with suspicion. We are marked as burglars, and that label seems indelible. So everybody looks down upon us. Will the doctor be different? Even the ASHA didi who visits our village does not trust us. How can we then approach the hospital?

Nevertheless, our field experiences suggest that the barriers of socialisation are not insurmountable. In another village, however, we found that a difference in the approach of the local health worker made a significant change in the health seeking behaviour of the Adivasis. In a village near Belpahari, the health workers—ASHAs and ANMs, some of whom were Adivasis—accompanied the patients to the Belpahari Super Specialty Hospital, where, according to the villagers, the “doctors treated us well. They did the tests, gave us medicines, and cured our disease.” Unfortunate as it is, the realisation of the idea of accompanying the patients tended to depend upon the individual will and ability of the health workers. By design, the grass root level health system is much more responsive to reproductive health than general health. This is reflected in the high share of institutional delivery but a much lower degree of utilisation of health services for general health problems (more on this presently).

Aside of the problem of functionality, the ethno-linguistic difference between the providers and the people seemed to have added a social dimension to the problem of accessibility. To illustrate, most villages were visited by Accredited Social Health Activists (ASHAs), but 41 percent of them belonged to non-Adivasi communities and did not speak the Adivasi languages. Many of them actually complained that the Adivasi women “could not speak in *our* tongue; hence often we fail to understand what they wanted to communicate.” Among the ANMs, the number of non-Adivasis was much higher. In fact, we had come across very few Adivasi ANMs. At the higher levels of the health system the problem of communication appeared to worsen – in most cases doctors had to depend completely on their clinical knowledge to diagnose the ailments. As a doctor told us,

Listen, a female patient came with some gynecological problems. She could not tell me anything about the suffering. How could I treat her, if I didn't know about the suffering? She was accompanied by her mother, who also could not communicate with me. I felt frustrated. Then I identified a word “pund”. What is it? My intuition told me that the word is the clue. Fortunately, there was someone who had some knowledge of

Santali, and he told me that the Santali “pund” stands for white. So, it was a case of white discharge... I have come across many such patients. What is important is to provide some interpreters in every clinic.

The problem of communication inter alia other relations of power made the Adivasis helplessly submit to the non-Adivasi ‘superior others.’ Thus, the difficulty of physical access to the health facilities combined with social distance between the provider and the people seemed to have put a constraint on the Adivasis to enhance socialisation with the health system – even health facilities closer to their habitations appeared to them foreign and unreachable.

Poor standards of living

The Adivasis partnered in this study lived in a setting where most of the households’ livelihood was dependent on manual work including labour hiring and working in one’s own field where wage rates were far too inadequate even for mere subsistence, and owing to the smallness of area and poor quality of land, agricultural production often failed to meet the survival requirements; people were perennially trapped in the vicious cycle of ill-health, loan, and poverty (discussed in Chapter 4); and relentless working of the exploitation-deprivation-victim blaming nexus on one hand, and poor levels of education and resultant lack of access to information on the other had impacted their social psyche to bend it into accepting all atrocities, deprivations, and sufferings as the will of God. Poverty and social inequalities shaped the Adivasi life to live in conditions easily susceptible to ill health. The following sections discuss some of the connected issues.

Quantity and Quality of food

Hunger is part of Adivasi life. It is so internalised in social life that even very rich languages like Santali and Mundari do not have separate terms for hunger and poverty – ‘rengeç’ denotes both. A household that suffers from hunger is considered to be poor. In other vocabularies too we have found similar expressions. Despite increased food production, a section of the West Bengal population, especially the Adivasis, has for a long a time been facing the wrath of hunger.⁷ Although things have changed over time, especially after the implementation of The National Food Security Act, 2013 (NFSA), hunger is yet to disappear from the Adivasi household. More than two thirds (67% to be exact) of the villages under this study reportedly faced hunger to some extent. Even the quality of food intake required for proper nutritional standards was found to be severely affected by scarcity owing to a lack of purchasing power.

⁷ Rana K (2011), Chakraborty and Mukherjee (2009)

Only 27 percent of the households could afford to include pulses in their food daily; corresponding figures for egg, fish, milk, meat, and fruits were negligible. On the other hand, the number of households that could afford most of the above items only occasionally, and some items never, was significantly high (see Table 3.6).

Table 3.6. Distribution of Adivasi households (in percent) according to the frequency of affordability to keep in menu certain food items (N=1000)

Frequency	Pulses (Dal)	Egg	Fish	Meat	Milk or Curd	Fruits
Daily	27.3	2.0	4.5	1.9	9.2	1.0
Twice/Thrice in a week	35.2	10.8	13.9	9.7	0.5	2.4
Once in a week	10.8	26.2	29.4	26.5	1.3	1.8
Sometimes	24.4	54.0	50.4	59.2	29.7	73.9
Never	2.3	7.0	1.8	2.7	59.3	20.9

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Poor living arrangements

Apart from the feebleness of food security, our study population was found to be living in hugely sub-par living arrangements that were particularly detrimental to health. Of the total households, 10 percent did not have a separate place to cook in and meals were prepared in living rooms.⁸ The constraint of space for a separate kitchen was seen to afflict the Savars most (30%) followed by Bediyas (20%) (see Table A.3.1 in Appendix III). A large majority of the households (91%) reportedly used solid fuels like wood, straw, jute stick, leaves, coal/coke, dung cake, or charcoal) for cooking; only nine percent—mainly from Tamang, Limbu, Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa, Mech, and Oraon communities—were found to use liquid petroleum gas (LPG) as the primary fuel for preparing food (see Table A.3.2 in Appendix III). A little higher than one fifth (22%) of the households had no smoke exhaust although they were cooking either in separate kitchens or in living rooms. 16 percent of the households shared their rooms with livestock (goats, cattle, poultry).

Nearly two thirds of the households (64.4% to be exact) did not have any kind of drainage system. Absence of any drainage system was highest among the Savars (97%) and lowest among the hill tribes of North Bengal (13% for each of Lepcha, Tamang, Limbu, and Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa). Among those who had any drainage system, had mostly uncovered kutchra drains. Most importantly, only nine percent of the households had effective drainage facility with outfall system (see Table A.3.3 in Appendix III).

⁸ The households usually cooking in open place was also preparing meals in living rooms in special circumstances such as rain.

Drinking water appeared to be a major cause of concern: one-fifth of the households (19.3% to be exact) had to use uncovered dug wells for drinking water. Households using drinking water from uncovered dug wells were very high among the Lodhas (93%).⁹ More than one-fourth of the households had only the facility of piped water (27.5% to be exact). A large number of households (44%) depended upon tube wells but the majority of them complained that often they had to depend partly on other unsafe sources like dug wells and streams, especially during summer when the tube wells failed due to low water levels. Also, there were complaints about frequent break down of tube wells and them not being repaired soon enough. While the problem of drinking water was reported to be particularly acute in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri in the north and Paschim Medinipur in the south, most of other districts also experienced the problem in varying degrees (see Table A.3.5 in Appendix III).

Extent of open defecation

Open defecation has been acknowledged as a major public health issue and there has been much sloganeering about making the country open-defecation-free. Yet, to the disappointment of the citizens, public policies and programmes

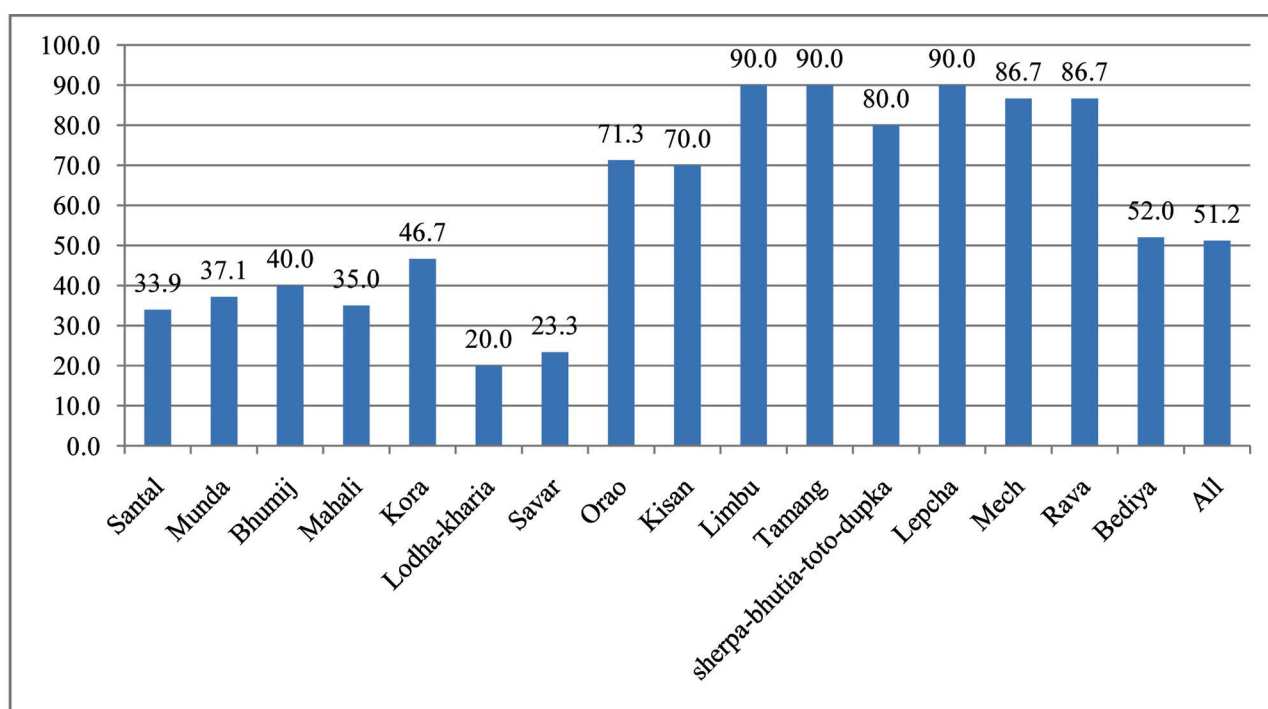


Improved source denied: Oraon women fetching water in tea garden

⁹ Following the Census methodology, as Lodhas and Kharias are clubbed together, the combined proportion of Lodhas and Kharias appeared to be 50 per cent in Table A.3.4 in Appendix III.

are yet to achieve much success in facilitating a large section of the Adivasis in making their societies open-defecation-free. Of the total households under our survey, only 51 percent had functional toilets (only 19% with septic tanks, and the rest with pits). While 44 percent clearly had no toilet facility, another five percent had unusable toilets or toilets that were under construction. While the problem of open defecation was found to affect almost all groups, the extent of the menace of open defecation was highest among the Lodha-Kharias (80%) followed by Savars (77%). It was the lowest among the Tamangs, Limbus, and Lepchas (10% each) (see Table A.3.6 in Appendix III).¹⁰ The practice of using soap or other sanitizing agents was found only in 55 percent households. Here too we found wide inter-community variations – among the Lepchas and Limbus the extent of this practice was 100 percent, followed by Tamangs at 98 percent, but among the Savars it was only two households (7%) (see Table A.3.7 in Appendix III).

Figure 3.1. Community wise distribution of Adivasi households having functional toilets



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Often, officials and others were fond of attributing the deficit to the cultural background of the Adivasis but the reality spoke a different language – it was the failure of public policies to reconcile the imbalances in social and other power

¹⁰ Notably, none of the Lodha households in our survey had any latrine at the time of our visit leaving for them no other way but to defecate openly.

relations that thrust upon the Adivasis a major public health threat in the form of open defecation (discussed at length in Chapter 5).

3.4 Weakness of Prevention Programmes and Other Grass Root Level Services

Weaknesses of grass root level health services appeared to have a particular bearing on the Adivasis. Despite the immunisation programme being underscored in public policies, our survey findings indicate a dismaying picture. Issuing and maintaining Immunisation cards for the children (aged 12 months to 24 months) by the health department is a mandatory provision. Yet, of the reported 53 children (completed one year but below two years) for immunisation, only 36 (68%) households could show the cards; others could not recollect whether the card was issued at all. Again, of the 36 children for whom cards were available, only 21 (58%) received full doses of immunisation to be vaccinated within the first year of their lives. But, all the children considered together (for those who did and didn't have cards) the extent of full immunisation was only 40 percent.

Table 3.7: Extent of immunisation of Adivasi children (completed 12 months but below 24 months)

Number of children	53
Immunization card available at the household	36 (67.9%)
Full immunization according to card	21(58.3%)
Full immunization based on total reporting for immunization of children	21(39.6%)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Some of the ANMs complained that mothers did not care to keep the cards safely and often misplaced them. This apart, they added, despite several reminders mothers did not bring the children to the immunisation centres. However, the mothers told us a different story: whenever they received information about immunisation they took their children to the centre. There may be truth in both stories, but the point is that deprivation of a basic human right—to be able to prevent the preventable diseases—is simply unacceptable. Instead of following the moral mandate to cover all children under the immunisation programme, missing out a substantial section of them cannot but be recognised as a gross failure of the health system. The root of the failure lies at different levels: poor readiness in infrastructure and human resource, blaming the victims by attributing the failure to the cultural backwardness of the Adivasis, and blaming the hierarchically lower strata of the health workers. First, there is a severe crisis

of workforce at every level of the health services.¹¹ Second, we have discussed above how the social distance (ethnic, linguistic, and class) between the health providers and the people plays a detrimental role in the delivery of health services. A large section of the grass root level health providers belonged to non-Adivasi communities. Notwithstanding lower levels of education, as we have seen in Chapter 2, there were a considerable number of Adivasi youths in the area who could be potential resources for improving both education and health services. However, following straight jacketed and generalised rules never allowed public policy to come to terms with the particularities of problems. The social distance between the health providers and the people not only shapes the relationship between the two but also creates other practical problems. In several villages, we have seen that the grass root level health providers working in the sub-centres or Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS) came from villages far away. The time consumed to commute between home and working area and other difficulties (crossing long stretches of forest and encountering elephants were a few among many) are bound to create a gap between the potential and the actual work done. All these problems seemed to have had an adverse impact on a major component of health services, namely, interaction between the providers and the people. The responses of the mothers on the services/advice received from the local health providers amply prove the existence of this deficit. For example, a large section of the mothers (59%) who gave birth in the one year preceding the survey reported that they did not receive any post-natal care after the birth of their last child. The counseling gap was reflected in the mothers' knowledge about their own health and that of their children: only 32 percent of the mothers said that they knew how to manage diarrhea in children. Again, more than two fifths of them (56%) did not know that breast feeding should be started within an hour of birth. Limited as the reach of the services were, they, however, pointed to a very important link: people were not shy of utilising the services when available; rather, the often-cited problem of indifference or cultural backwardness of the Advasis could be changed for the better if and when adequate arrangements were provided.

3.5 Myth and Reality

Healthcare providers, officials, and others responsible for shaping and improving the health status of citizens, tended to cling to old rhetoric in their conversation with us about Adivasi health: "They drink a lot, they eat unhygienic food, and their lifestyle is unclean and unhealthy, and so on." What made the problem even more acute was that, "they [Advasis] are superstitious and believe in witchcraft,

11 Rana K (2011), Bala and Thiruselvakumar (2009), Mavalankar (2016), Jana and Rajak (2006)

sorcery, faith healing, or herbal medicines, and rigidly abhor modern medicines.” We have often heard in the field that the Adivasis did not come to the health centres or hospitals. “You cannot change their belief,” said a district level official of Purulia.

Culturally constructed beliefs, as anthropologists tell us, play an important role in people’s practices of living. Belief, however, is conditioned by a particular reality. The Adivasis who have for centuries been treated by the state and dominant society as enemies¹² and have been lacking basic necessities such as medicine and other life enhancing practices, have developed particular beliefs regarding health ailment and treatment. As Reverend P. O. Bodding noted about the Santals, “They believe that the Creator has furnished remedies against all ills, if they can only find them.” “This belief,” however, he adds, “does not always seem to be compatible with their belief in the doings of the evil spirits; but they exert themselves to cure also by natural means.”¹³ Santals, and many other Adivasi groups, have survived with complex philosophical formations. Believing in the proposition that the Creator has provided remedies for all ills and accepting the idea that not being able to avail of those remedies is due to a divine plan leads them to resort to archaic and futile practices such as consulting faith healers and relying on supposedly medicinal plants and massages that are actually of no help and serve no real purpose. In the absence of access to practical and established forms of medicine, they have been led to experiment with herbal medicines. This conditioning is so deep rooted that even in cases where limited amounts of useful medicines were available, the Adivasis were found to abhor them, relying instead on their traditional customs of healing. In Bodding’s record we find herbal prescriptions for 305 different ailments, although Bodding himself was skeptical of the efficacy of these prescriptions.

Evidence, however, speaks for itself. While it is easy to attribute the poor health status of the Adivasis to their ‘beliefs,’ this practice itself seems to be based on the accepted habit of normative societies that are quick to blame the victim for ills that have been perpetuated over years upon the disadvantaged. It is a disappointing admission that this practice is universal and thrives by feeding upon the vulnerabilities of underprivileged, neglected and marginalised communities.¹⁴ Paul Farmer notes, “In central Haiti, accusations of sorcery were central to the way in which much suffering was explained. It was in Haiti, too, that I learned about a different kind of sorcery, much more malignant in

12 Singh (2017), p452

13 Bodding, ([1925-40] 2001), p44

14 Roberts (2016)

its impact...How else would we explain the intense focus on the actions and ideologies of its victims rather than those of its unseen perpetrators?” Instances of victim blaming abound in India. Chroniclers of colonial and independent India accused the Santals and other Adivasis of being ‘allergic to vaccination’ and ‘abhorring allopathic medicines’ (Roy Choudhury, 1965: 616). One need not, however, labour much to find evidence of the baselessness of the accusation: only six pages into this tract, the reader finds that “a programme of mass vaccination against smallpox produced excellent results [in Santal Pargana, an Adivasi predominant district] (Roy Choudhury, 1965: 623).¹⁵ Given the previous claim of Adivasis being “allergic to vaccination,” we must ponder over the success of the programme. The accusation, as some scholarly works suggest, followed a pure reasoning of justifying inaction and perpetuating violence against certain sections of citizens. For example, a report on healthcare services by the Pratichi Research Team in Birbhum of West Bengal and Dumka of Jharkhand¹⁶ found the Adivasis to embrace modern medicine whenever available. Awkwardly, studies found that insufficient presence of publicly delivered health services often gave rise to a private health market where modern allopathic medicines were being practiced in a pathetically primitive way by the practitioners—popularly known as quacks—who were either completely untrained or trained in different branches of medicine, such as Ayurved or Homoeopathy (more on this presently). Findings of the present study take us along a line corroborative to the general trend of deprivation and accusation.

3.6 Health Ailments and Health Seeking Behaviour

Let us look at the findings on child birth. Of the total 61 deliveries one year prior to our survey, 54 (89%) were done at the institutions, mainly in government hospitals. Since most of the nearby PHCs were not equipped with inpatient department and child birth facilities mothers required to access the public hospitals. Owing to the constraint of affordability—meeting expenses—only one of the total institutional deliveries was done at a private hospital. Only three (5%) of the institutional deliveries were done at PHCs. It would have been convenient for the mothers if the PHCs were equipped aptly enough to follow the declared norm of the government to provide child birth facilities at these institutions.

15 See Roychoudhury (1965).

16 See Pratichi Research Team (2005); Also see, Rana (2017).

Table 3.8. Distribution of Adivasi child birth according to place of delivery

Institutional Delivery				Delivery at Home			Sample size
PHC	Government Hospital	Private Hospital	Total	By trained Dai	By Untrained Dai	Total	
3 (4.9)	50 (82.0)	1 (1.6)	54 (88.5)	2 (3.3)	5 (8.2)	7 (11.5)	61

(Figures in parentheses indicate percentage)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Nevertheless, despite constraints of travelling to the hospitals (40% mothers had to travel more than 10 kilometers), and other functional problems of the healthcare system discussed above, there has been substantial development in the trend of institutional delivery.¹⁷

“Even few years ago it was very different,” chuckled Siri Mahli, a middle-aged woman of Purulia.

My mother gave birth at home, her mother gave birth at home, and I too gave birth at home. But look at my grandson. He was born in the hospital. The ASHA didi in our area is very active. She keeps all the information as to who becomes pregnant, and makes arrangement to take the pregnant mother to the hospital... See the hospital is far away. It took, I don't remember how long, about three hours. The ASHA didi organised a vehicle [Nischoy Jan] which took us to the hospital. First she said that it was free of cost, but when we reached the hospital the driver asked for some money. So we gave him a hundred rupees. We did not mind, we are very grateful that the vehicle took my daughter-in-law to the hospital in time. Also she received some money from the government.

However, not all mothers received the Nischoy Jan services: eight (15%) of the 53 mothers who had institutional deliveries at government facilities did not receive the Nischoy Jan facility. While some of them had no information about it, some could not avail the help of the local health workers. Again, not all mothers were assisted by the local health workers in institutional delivery and were forced to give birth at home.

Nevertheless, the higher rate of institutional delivery found by the survey reinforced the connection of health seeking behaviour more strongly with the functioning of the publicly delivered health services rather than with particular socio-cultural contexts. The same can also be seen from a different angle – the choice of sources of treatment of diseases.

¹⁷ One mother could not tell us the distance of the hospital where she gave the birth to her child.

Sources of Medical Treatment

Notwithstanding a growing trend of non-communicable diseases (NCDs)¹⁸, which was also reflected in our survey, the occurrences of diseases reported in our survey were mostly remediable at the primary level facilities. It did not, however, mean that higher level facilities did not require strengthening. Rather, the findings suggest that there was a need to address the growing menace of NCDs (for example, 6% of the episodes were related to cardiac or high blood pressure problems) and other illnesses that required secondary or tertiary level of care. At the same time, it was crucially important to strengthen the primary health care system. For example, nearly half of the total episodes of illnesses that had occurred in the last 30 days prior to the survey that the respondents recalled were related to cold and cough; shares of diarrhea, and gastritis-abdominal pain-vomiting were nine percent and six percent, respectively (see Table 3.9).

Table 3.9. Reported episodes of illnesses of Adivasis in the past 30 days prior to the survey (in percent)

Disease	No of episodes	Percentage
Diarrhea/Dysentery	49	9.2
Cold-Cough-Fever	250	46.9
Gastritis or abdominal pain or vomiting)	31	5.8
Headache and or Body ache	18	3.4
Malaria	13	2.4
Typhoid	5	0.9
Jaundice	4	0.8
Tuberculosis	4	0.8
Measles	3	0.6
Chicken Pox	5	0.9
Skin diseases (including a case of leprosy)	12	2.3
Gynecological diseases	5	0.9
Cardio-Vascular Diseasesand or High Blood Pressure	31	5.8
Diabetes	5	0.9
Arthritis	5	0.9
Neurological Diseases	5	0.9
Oral diseases	4	0.8
Eye or Ear problem	4	0.8
Low Blood Pressure or Anaemia	7	1.3
Thyroid	3	0.6
Accident and injuries	24	4.5
Others	46	8.6
Total	533	100.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

18 Pratichi Institute (2012)

Such illnesses should be remediable at the primary level of healthcare. The need to arrange for remedies at the local level gathers strength from the fact that being treated for such illnesses at a higher level is most often not possible. In addition, many of the problems that required hospitalised care could be duly addressed at the primary level facilities provided they were adequately equipped as per requirements demanded by norms and could thus reduce the burden of workload in hospitals.¹⁹

Despite high demands that arose from this context, there seems to have been no development towards them being met. As found by the survey, in case of out-patient care, 44 percent patients sought treatment from unqualified practitioners. A miniscule number of patients (8%) sought treatment from primary services (sub-centres and PHCs), while 19 percent sought treatment from government hospitals.^{20, 21} Local faith healers or traditional herbal practitioners were visited by six patients only (1.3% of all sources of treatment) – their existence seemed to be highly magnified in the imagination of the non-Adivasi mind!

Table 3.10. Distribution of Adivasi patients according to sources of medical treatment

	In-patient care (%) N= 70	Out-patient care (%) N= 463
Sub center	0	1.5
PHC	8.6	6.5
Govt. hospital	64.3	19.2
Tea garden clinic or hospital	5.7	3.2
Private doctor	0.0	21.2
Private hospital	21.4	0.6
ICDS or ASHA	0.0	0.6
Unqualified practitioners	0.0	43.6
Traditional herbal practitioners	0.0	0.9
Local faith healers	0.0	0.4
Others	0.0	0.9
No treatment	0.0	1.3
Total	100	100.0

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

¹⁹ Rana (2017).

²⁰ The hill Adivasis of North Bengal, namely, Limbu, Tamang and Lepchas, were found to visit, for out-patient care, mostly the doctors in private clinics or in private hospitals. (see Table A.3.8 in Appendix III). Notably, unqualified medical practitioners were not available in the hilly areas of Darjeeling district.

²¹ The tea garden clinics or hospitals were found to be visited by 24 percent of the out-patients living in the teagarden areas.

In case of in-patient care, however, a majority of the patients were treated at public facilities, namely, government hospitals (64%), and PHCs (7%). In contrast, 21 percent of the patients were reported to have sought treatment at private hospitals.

It was partially the same psyche that made the Adivasis rely upon unqualified practitioners: they were readily available, and they treated the patients on credit – which, in a cash starved economy, was often a relief to the patients. Dependence on public facilities for hospitalised treatment was clearly linked with the population's socio-economic status: visiting private hospitals was not only expensive but also a relatively unknown area for the patients and their near ones who had limited information about them. The survey found a huge difference in the average expenses incurred for treatment received from different sources. It was the highest for private hospitals and private doctors but, disturbingly, expenses incurred at public facilities were also substantial as compared to the expenses incurred against the services of unqualified providers (see Table 3.11). It may well be that the ailments for which treatment was sought from unqualified practitioners were less acute in nature, but still the question why patients should be required to pay at public facilities (in whatever form, including buying medicines) remained unanswered and such experience certainly contributed to pushing the patients to unqualified practitioners.

Table 3.11. Average expenditure incurred by Adivasis on medical treatment (in Rs)

	PHC/Govt. hospital	Private doctor / private hospital	Unqualified practitioner	Tea garden clinic/hospital
Outpatient	1447	2243	434	471
In-patient	6050	45100*	-	353

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

*In private hospital or nursing home

In other words, rather than being the natural choice, unqualified practitioners were in fact an artificially created filler group. Let us illustrate the point with the story of Lukha Hembrom of Gopiballavpur:

It was many years ago, may be five, may be six. I am a stupid man (*boka hor kanain*), I can't remember. So, it happened like this. I was suffering from fever. First I tried some herbal medicines, but they did not work. Then I went to the local centre. But the *didmoni* over there asked me to visit the *haspatal* [actually the PHC, people in many areas call the PHCs *haspatal*]. So I did. But there were no doctors or any others to treat me. Then someone at the *haspatal* advised me to visit the big *haspatal* [the BPHC]. But, it was

far away, and there was nobody at home to carry me on the pillion of the bicycle, which other than walking is the only mode of transport to commute a distance. Then I came back home. My fever rose. I kept lying down for some hours. Then my wife went to the nearby village and gave Sadhan *daktar* a call. He came with his *bhutbhuti* [motorcycle], and gave me some medicines. He always carries some medicines in his bag. But we did not have money to pay him. No matter, he said, you can pay me later, or you can repay the debt by working in my field. From then on, I am depending on him. I know he is a cheat (*adi thog bor kana*). Even then he is good, he treated me on credit, who would do that?

Sadhan *daktar* belonged to a local land owning family. He had studied up to class 10, and had failed the secondary exam. In his words,

Cultivation is no longer profitable, and we do not have a large holding. So, my family has gone into trading of rice, bamboo, sal (*Shorea robusta*) leaves, etc. Somehow I developed a very good relationship with a doctor and a medicine shop where he had his private clinic. I learnt something from him; also the medicine shop owner helped me. Now I have learnt a lot...Well, I do not take any risk. Whenever critical cases come I refer them either to the private doctor – those who can afford the expenses, or to the hospital – those who are poor, like the Adivasis. Since I help them, they too come first to me. Tell me who will serve them 24X7? ... It is a case of mutual benefit. I make my living by providing medical care, and the patients get the services, without which they would have had severe consequences.

The consequences of falling ill were related not only to the individual's suffering but also to many other gradients, including falling into the health-poverty-trap, loan and poverty trap, loss of work and income of the patient as well as other family members, falling into the work loss and loan trap, negative effect on children's education, and increased vulnerability to other diseases.²² Let us take the example of Sudan Oraon, a day-earner in a village in Jalpaiguri:

I fell ill, as serious abdominal pain developed. I did not get any help from the local *haspatal*. The local quack asked me to go to the private clinic of a doctor. So I went there. I was advised many tests, which cost about Rs 1,500. I had to pay another Rs 2,000 towards the doctor's fees, medicine, and transportation. Where could we get so much of money? I borrowed some from relatives and some from a local trader on interest...Owing to

22 Pratiche Health Report, ibidum: 64-67, and 84-97; Dreze and Sen (2013), Chapter 6.

illness I could not go to work, and my wife could not also go as she was attending me. Then where would the food come from? We borrowed another Rs 2,000. Now after recovering from illness we are repaying the loan from part of the wages earned. It means you work the whole day but bring home only half of the day's wage.

Apart from falling into a loan trap, as our study found, owing to poor quality of treatments received, patients often became susceptible to other diseases. Also, in many cases, financial compulsion made the patients work which in turn multiplied and further complicated their illness.

3.7 Concluding Remarks

The problems of the Indian healthcare system are enormous and the general problem takes a particularly inflicting character when it comes to the question of the health and healthcare of the Adivasis – the most deprived citizens of the country. However, in Dreze and Sen's emphasis, "rather than being overwhelmed by their enormity, we should identify the ways and means of overcoming the adversities, drawing both of the analysis... of the factors that have contributed to this crisis, and also...on the lessons that have emerged from the experiences of other developing countries which have dealt with this problem much better than India has."²³

The approach to the problem of healthcare of the Adivasis must take a bio-social route. The problems have multiple connections including public health, poverty, exclusions on the basis of ethnicity and language, illiteracy and poor opportunities of education, poor implementation of the public programmes related to livelihood, nutrition, food security, and employment (we have discussed these issues in Chapter 5).

Having said that, it must be recognised that as time consuming as the processes of achieving the long term goals may be, they can come about through immediate actions guided towards solving some of the easily remediable problems.

The centrally important task here is to strengthen the primary healthcare system. The local sub-centres and PHCs must be fully equipped to address healthcare issues so as to come to terms with all barriers of access to health facilities. There is no reason why patients should need to go to tertiary level hospitals for treatment or child birth, and why it should involve expenditure. Also, it is important to orient the health workforce to make them empathically acquainted with the patients. The preconceived notion of cultural backwardness

23 Dreze and Sen (2013) op cit

must give way to evaluating reality within its objective setting. Also, a culture of companionship based on social morality must be developed rather than being dragged down by a so-called 'professional' receiver-provider relationship. Without recognizing the Adivasis as co-citizens, no programme to improve their health status, despite benevolent intentions, can succeed.

To eradicate the problem of social accessibility, public policy must move beyond convention and create room for Adivasi youth in the localities to join the local workforce. This will require certain innovative training. Different experiences from home and abroad further strengthen this case.²⁴

Apart from recruiting health workers from the community, other means of involving the population in the delivery of healthcare must be developed. This may be done through an integrated knitting of various agencies, including the ICDS, primary schools, self-help groups, and so on.

Finally, borrowing from Dreze and Sen,

“[I]ssues of health and health care must be brought much closer to the centre of attention in democratic politics....While health has had little place in public reasoning in India as a whole, democratic engagement with health issues has played a very important role in the transformation of health policies in countries like Thailand, Brazil and Mexico, and within India, in Tamil Nadu and Kerala....Democracy gives India the freedom to learn from any country in the world, and there are excellent reasons for us to make much greater use of informed reasoning in the practice of democracy, rather than our being stuck in the hole in which we have placed ourselves, in the absence of systematic reasoning about the most important necessity of the people.”

What can be more important for a democracy than recognising and removing the onslaught of health inequities that the Adivasis face? Health makes a person a recognisable human being, and it is a moral imperative to ensure good health for all.

²⁴ See for international initiatives, Anand et al (2012); There are many lessons at the national level. A programme ran by Pratichi Trust in association with Ayo-Aidari Trust in Dumka district of Jharkhand by training and involving Adivasi health workers produced excellent results. See, Pratichi Research Team (2006).

4. Livelihood : Constrained Choices

The history of livelihood of the Adivasis in India entails a process of transformation of a self-reliant economy into a market-based wage economy. While a productive asset like land has faced alienation, the symbiotic relationship between human beings and nature has also faced distortion and led to their alienation from forestland. The shrinkage of traditional livelihood opportunities resulting from the alienation of natural resources and other problems has finally left no alternative for the Adivasis but to become wage labourers. Alas, the invisibility of state action towards creating an equitable environment for the Adivasis to enhance their capabilities to lead a decent and dignified life is contrasted sharply with the denial of basic rights and snatching away of the setting blessed by nature that helped them survive for centuries. The demand raised by some Adivasis, “Give us back our forest and lands, give us equal opportunity of education, give us employment, and see, whether the Adivasi can prosper or not,” must find an echo to be heard by the state and dominant society.

4.1 Introduction

Gada ade ade te mathasude bilienho

Dirin’ eni kikir guchu eni kokor

Unkinkin jom chaba mathasude ho

(By the stream the *mathasude* crop has ripened/the *kikir* [an imaginary bird] grew horns and the *kokor* [another imaginary bird] grew a beard/they ate up all the crops).

The underlying meaning of the satire relates to a situation where the villagers cultivated the low land by the stream, but using their tricks, the non-Adivasi money lender and trader plundered it all. The metaphor used in the song above by a particular Adivasi group — the Santals — largely reflects the agriculture-based livelihood of many Adivasi groups and the social relations associated with it. The livelihood of the Adivasi groups in India, traditionally based on land



Life goes on: A Rava woman fetching firewood

and forests, was basically a subsistence level economy even after the transfer of power in 1947. Although a considerable section of the Adivasis were pushed into or engaged in plantation, mining, and industrial work well before Independence, most of them continued to derive sustenance from agriculture. Part of the requirement of food was supplemented by locally available forest-grown fruits, roots and vegetables. The supplementary arrangement was developed in two ways: lack of food-sufficiency from lands, much of which were low yielding, and availability of natural resources surrounding their habitations. Production was based on the exploitation of local resources largely for consumption purposes.¹ However, due to alienation from land and forests, as was the case in the colonial period, many of them lost the opportunity to fulfill their livelihood needs from natural resources. The development policy and the forest conservation policy pursued by the state in the post-Independence period further alienated the Adivasis from their natural habitat, posing serious challenges to their survival. For example, the *Sardar Sarovar Project* alone uprooted more than 16,000 Adivasi 'families' in Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra and Gujarat. The displacement forced many of them to find varied, culture-separated, uncertain and poorly rewarding means of sustenance or livelihood.² Virginius Xaxa maintained that the major source of land alienation in the post-Independence period was not so much the encroachment of the non-Adivasis into the Adivasi land as was the process of development that the Indian state has followed during the period.³ In West Bengal, while '*Chuar Bidroho*' bears evidence of land alienation from Adivasis to non-Adivasis in the colonial period, the incidence of land alienation due to the strategy of development was found to take place through the construction of Mukutmanipur Dam (Kangsabati Reservoir), Durgapur Steel Plant, Chittaranjan Locomotive Works and the like in the post-colonial period.⁴

More recently, fresh incidences of land alienation were found to have taken place due to the expansion of pig iron plants and open cast mines in the districts of Paschim Medinipur and Bardhaman respectively. According to Walter Fernandes, about 1.4 million Adivasis in West Bengal were affected (taking together both Displaced Persons and Project Affected Persons) owing to various development projects from 1947 to 2000. Despite the extent of land alienation among the Adivasis in West Bengal (20%) being lower than that of the all-India figure

1 Singh (1982) and Elwin (1963)

2 See Modi (2012) for detail.

3 Xaxa (2012)

4 Alienation from land, as a result of Permanent Settlement, led the *Bhumij* Adivasis in Jangalmahal to revolt against the British regime in 1798-99. This revolt came to be known as '*Chuar Bidroho*' to others. See Roy (1993) to get details of this revolt.

(40%), the issue cannot be ignored at all and must receive special attention.⁵ Such alienation of Adivasis from their traditional sources of livelihood has been making considerable changes in their occupational pattern. K S Singh holds large scale alienation of Adivasi land responsible for the rise and decline in the respective proportion of Adivasi agricultural labourers and cultivators in the 1971 Census.⁶ Studies have found that many varieties of non-timber forest produces (NTFP) have disappeared from the collection activity chart of the communities when the villages were relocated.⁷ K S Singh draws our attention to the shift among the Adivasi communities of India from traditional to newer occupations; the same trend is recounted again in the report of the High Level Committee constituted by the Prime Minister's Office in 2014.⁸ In West Bengal, as has been argued, the alienation of Bhumij and Santal Adivasis from their land and forests in the colonial and post-colonial periods (in the areas bordering the districts of Purulia, Bankura, and erstwhile Medinipur) was responsible for the seasonal migration of those people for work in the rice fields of the Bengal plains as agricultural labourers.⁹ Similarly, depletion of forests has thrown up serious challenges vis-à-vis the food gathering practices of the Kharias.¹⁰

Thus, upon losing control over land and forests since the colonial period, a section of the Adivasi population has been searching for an alternative means of subsistence; again, another section, with relative success in retaining access to land and forests, has been struggling to attain decent standards of living. This explains why even after six decades of Independence 43 percent of the Adivasi population in India was found to remain below the poverty line though the corresponding figure was 22 percent for all social groups taken together, and has developed among them such helplessness that it has convinced them to accept the injustices and calamities thrust upon them as their fate.¹¹ Many of our respondents believed:

What can we do? It is our fate to serve the Dikus (non-Adivasis). It is God-given. We have no other option but hard work, and yet we are destined not to be secured of two square meals a day. Our parents lived in penury. We are living in utmost poverty. And our children are born with back-breaking work and a burning stomach written on their foreheads.

5 See Fernandes (2007) for detail.

6 Singh (1982)

7 See Kabra (2012) to know the impact of relocation of the Shariya tribe from the Kuno wildlife sanctuary in Madhya Pradesh.

8 Singh (1997) and GoI, MoTA (2014)

9 Mazumdar (2016)

10 See Sinha (1982) for details. The Pratichi field survey reveals that the Kharias mentioned there were no other than those who reported themselves as Savars in our survey.

11 Poverty rates as cited by GoI, MoTA (2014).

Only a miniscule section of the Adivasi people has managed, to some extent, to harvest the fruits of development, while for the vast population the opportunity is rather restricted. This complex and internally differentiated picture of Adivasi well-being needs careful scrutiny. For example, while K S Singh points towards an increase in agricultural production made by the Adivasis (by switching over from the tradition of mono-cropping into double or triple cropping with the aid of irrigation facilities) in two areas of Chhotanagpur, the Bhuria Commission Report suggests that due to poor irrigation facilities for the Adivasis even in the beginning of this century, their productivity in agriculture remains severely constrained.¹² Even today, as our survey found, only a few Adivasi households in West Bengal had had the provision of the irrigation facility, a precondition for increased agricultural production. Similarly, although a small section has a history of finding salaried employment in limited areas, like the Darjeeling hills for example, in general the Adivasis are found to have a nominal presence in Group A and Group B services.¹³ The present survey in West Bengal has not shown any significant progress in this regard.

Adivasis in the country in general seemed to have derived very little advantage—if at all—from the various development initiatives. Citing different cases along with the examples of the coal mines in West Bengal, the Dhebar Commission Report, for example, shows how the potential of new employment, opened up by industrialization or mining, was utilized more fully by non-Adivasis in India. It reported that in some of the coal mines of Asansol, for example, Adivasi people have been reduced from being the majority to only 10 percent of the labour force.¹⁴

However, in spite of the development-induced shrinkage of economic opportunities for them, the Adivasis in India are trying to survive by engaging themselves in a variety of income generating activities. Although a majority of the Adivasis in India has for long been attached to settled agriculture, the very occupation usually entails an ensemble of economic activities that include collection of minor forest produce, fishing, handicraft, wage labour, and so on.¹⁵ Indeed, the traditional economy of the Adivasis was also largely a combination of variegated activities viz. cultivation, food gathering, and handicrafts.¹⁶ In West Bengal, for instance, hardly any Adivasi household in our survey was found to depend upon a single source of occupation or income for their survival. Irrespective of sex and age (with high Worker Population Ratio

12 Singh (1982) and GoI (2004)

13 Bagchi (1982) and GoI, MoTA (2014)

14 Cited by Elwin (1963)

15 Sundar (2016)

16 GoI, MoTA (2014)

of 53 percent), most members of the households were trying to earn anything they could to support the expenditures for meeting basic needs. The following sections, drawing on our primary survey, will deal with these issues in detail, focusing on how the economic activities of the Adivasis in West Bengal revolve around, not unexpectedly, both traditional and newer sources of livelihood that span the spectrum of land, forests, industry and services.

4.2 The Primacy of Land: Dependence and Constraints

Cultivation of land has been the primary occupation of many Adivasi groups and this has found a place deep in their social memory, even in a changed pattern in occupation. When asked about their occupation, almost everybody among some of the numerically strong groups like Santals related their occupational identity with that of cultivators—“*chasa hor kanale*”—“we are cultivators.” A little probing, however, revealed that it was a false sense of pride (of being cultivators and not labourers, which is not considered by this previously



Changes for the worse: Conversion of agricultural lands in 24 Parganas leading to land alienation of the Adivasis

agricultural community as a respectable occupation) that shaped the response. Land as a source of livelihood is as important for the Adivasis in West Bengal as in all of India. As per Census 2011, while 79 percent of the Adivasi working population in India was dependent on agricultural land for survival, either as cultivators or as agricultural labourers, the corresponding figure for West Bengal was 70 percent. That is to say, although the share of agricultural land dependent population was lower in West Bengal in comparison to the whole country, it was substantially high enough to be reckoned with. However, unlike other states, the share of cultivators among the Adivasi working population was much lower in West Bengal – 12 percent against 35 percent for the entire country. No state except Kerala (nine percent) had a lower share of Adivasi cultivators than West Bengal in 2011. Even in rural areas, the share of cultivators for the Adivasis was only 13 percent in West Bengal though they live mostly in the rural areas (92%). It means that the Adivasis' dependence on land in West Bengal was due largely to working as agricultural labourers. In other words, the share of population possessing land for cultivation was smaller for the Adivasis in West Bengal than for many other states in India.¹⁷ But, the situation was not so unfavourable for the Adivasis in West Bengal in the early years after Independence: in 1961, the proportion of their working population engaged in cultivation was 50 percent. The 1951 census that collected data on cultivators together with their dependents showed that 57 percent of the Adivasi population in West Bengal was dependent on cultivation for their livelihood needs. Interestingly, the 1951 census differentiated the cultivators by the ownership of their cultivated land and it showed that 28 percent of the cultivation-dependent Adivasi population was 'wholly or mainly' cultivating their own land. In terms of possession of agricultural land by the Adivasis in West Bengal, therefore, the situation was more favourable earlier than it is now.

It is true that the large scale immigration that took place in the colonial period, particularly in tea gardens, made the share of the non-cultivating Adivasi population relatively higher in West Bengal; at the same time, the policy of development pursued in the post-Independence period must have played a decisive role in such a marked decline in the share of Adivasi cultivators later in West Bengal. The land reforms that took place in the 1970s could not compensate for this loss incurred by the Adivasis in West Bengal. The fragmentation of land due to increase in population has also had a bearing on the declining share of cultivators among the Adivasis in West Bengal. However, it emerges clearly from the Census data that in West Bengal, land as a productive asset could be

17 For all social groups taken together, the share of cultivators was 21 percent in 2011 for the rural areas of West Bengal.

utilized only by a small proportion of the Adivasi working population. Our survey reinforces that most of this cultivating population was not in a position to utilize the productive asset for the sustenance of their household members for the entire year.

Ownership Pattern

The first and foremost challenge for utilising land as a productive asset was the small size of the holdings that the Adivasis mostly owned. Our survey found the average land ownership of an Adivasi household to be 0.798 acre.¹⁸ Despite the long tradition of settled agriculture by most of the major Adivasi groups in West Bengal, a majority of Adivasi households (70%) in our survey were found to fall under the ‘marginal’ category of ownership holding (owning land more than 0.002 hectares but less than or equal to 1.000 hectares¹⁹); 23 percent of the households was landless (see Figure 4.1).²⁰ Categories other than ‘landless’ and ‘marginal’ holdings comprised altogether seven percent of Adivasi ownership holdings in our survey.²¹ Again, among those having marginal holdings as per our survey, two thirds owned less than one acre of land. Thus, it is quite expected that most of the Adivasi households in West Bengal would find it difficult to depend, in any significant way, on their land for survival.

The incidence of landlessness indicates that a substantial proportion of the Adivasi households in West Bengal (nearly a fourth in our survey) were not in a position at all to utilise land as a productive asset for their survival. The incidence of landlessness was the highest among the *Tamangs* and the *Oraons* – 73 percent for each. However, none of the Bhumij households in our survey was found landless (see Table 4.1). With respect to the inter-district variations in Adivasi landlessness, our survey found the extent to be the highest in Jalpaiguri district (55%) followed by Darjeeling district (50%), i.e., districts where household selection was made substantially from tea gardens (64% and 35% respectively). The incidence of landlessness was the lowest in Purulia and Malda district – one percent in each district (see Table A.4.1 in Appendix III). Importantly, 11 percent

18 As per National Sample Survey (NSS) figures for 2003, the size of the land owned by an Adivasi household in rural areas of West Bengal was 0.704 acre on an average. The corresponding figure for all social groups was 0.729 acre on an average – a little higher than the average for STs. See GoI, MoSPI (2006).

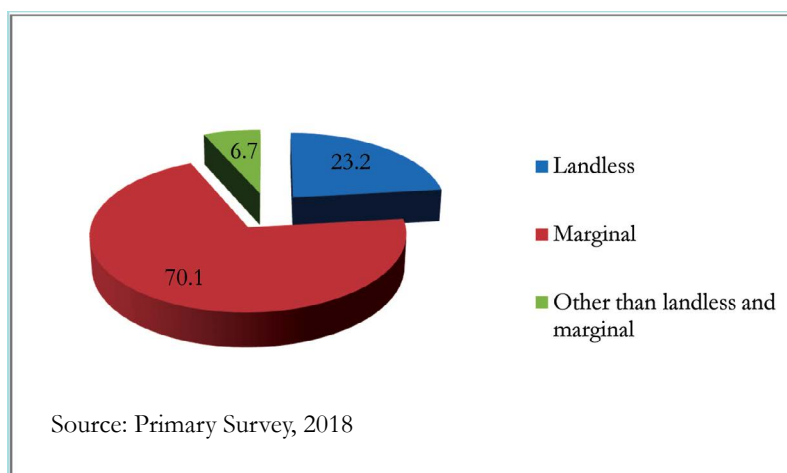
19 1 hectare = 2.471 acres.

20 Landless households are those who own land 0.002 hectares or less.

21 According to the NSS, the proportion of marginal and landless households in West Bengal was 79 and 14 per cent respectively in 2003. It may be worth a mention here that as per NSS, the highest incidence of landlessness was found for STs in West Bengal as well as in India. The proportion of landless was six percent for all social groups in the rural areas of West Bengal. See GoI, MoSPI(2006).

Figure 4.1. Distribution of Adivasi households by ownership of land (in percent)

of Adivasi households in our survey were found to own no land at all. Half of these households were ‘Tea Garden households’ (nearly six percent) staying inside the Garden without any legal entitlement over their homestead land.

**Table 4.1. Distribution of Adivasi households by ownership of land and by community (in percent)**

Community	Landless	Marginal	Small	Semi-medium	Medium	Sample size
Santal	7.9 (22)	81.1 (227)	9.6 (27)	1.4 (4)	0.0 (0)	280
Munda	32.9 (23)	65.7 (46)	1.4 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	70
Bhumij	0.0 (0)	91.4 (64)	7.1 (5)	1.4 (1)	0.0 (0)	70
Mahali	40.0 (16)	57.5 (23)	2.5 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	40
Kora	5.0 (3)	85.0 (51)	10.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Lodha-Kharia	40.0 (24)	56.7 (34)	3.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Savar	30.0 (9)	66.7 (20)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Oraon	72.5 (58)	27.5 (22)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	80
Kisan	2.0 (1)	98.0 (49)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50
Limbu	43.3 (13)	43.3 (13)	10.0 (3)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	30
Tamang	73.3 (44)	23.3 (14)	3.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	26.7 (8)	63.3 (19)	3.3 (1)	6.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	30
Lepcha	6.7 (2)	80.0 (24)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (3)	3.3 (1)	30
Mech	10.0 (3)	76.7 (23)	13.3 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Rava	10.0 (3)	86.7 (26)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Bediya	6.0 (3)	92.0 (46)	2.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50
All	23.2 (232)	70.1 (701)	5.5 (55)	1.1 (11)	0.1 (1)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Note: Landless – less than or equal to 0.002 hectares, Marginal – more than 0.002 hectares but less than or equal to 1.000 hectare, Small – more than 1.000 hectare but less than or equal to 2.000 hectares, Semi-medium – more than 2.000 hectares but less than or equal to 4.000 hectares, Medium – more than 4.000 hectares but less than or equal to 10.000 hectares, Large – more than 10.000 hectares.

Tenancy

Now, households with some opportunity of utilising their land for any productive purposes may possess some lands even without ownership status. The issue of possession is more significant for agriculture due to the prevailing system of sharing/leasing of agricultural land. We found eight percent of households in our survey that did not own any land at all for agricultural work but were engaged in some agricultural production.²² On an average, land possessed by an Adivasi household in our survey was found to be 0.844 acre. Besides homestead, the land under possession was found to be mostly utilised for agricultural production except for some households in the Sundarbans (North 24 Parganas district) that were utilising it wholly or partly for pisciculture. Looking at agricultural households only, we found that land possessed by an Adivasi household was of 1.375 acre on an average.^{23,24}

While disaggregating the land possessed by Adivasi agricultural households by different categories, we found that a large majority (94%) of them were under 'self-operated ownership'; the other types, namely 'lease in' and 'otherwise possession', formed only two percent and four percent of the total respectively (see Table 4.2). The districts and blocks having a higher concentration of Adivasi population were found to possess land more by 'ownership' than by 'lease in.' However, the 'otherwise' possession of land by a sizable proportion of households (14%) that includes the land under the Forest Department, probably suggests weaknesses in implementation of The Scheduled Adivasis and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 in West Bengal.²⁵

22 Agricultural work meaning any sort of agricultural production excluding livestock and fishery.

23 Agricultural household means household pursuing any sort of agricultural production excluding livestock and fishery and it was 57 percent of Adivasi households in our survey.

24 The Agricultural Census of 2010-11 shows a much higher figure (1.683 acres) for the Adivasi operational holdings in West Bengal. Importantly, as per the Agricultural Census, the average area of an operational holding was 1.833 acres for all social groups taken together in West Bengal in 2010-11, which is higher than the average for the Adivasis.

25 In contrast to the Agricultural Census, government land (under Forest Department or other department) possessed by any household was recorded as 'otherwise possession' in our data collection.

Table 4.2. Distribution of land by type of possession for Adivasi agricultural households

Type of possession	Households possessing land (in percent)*	Area possessed (in percent)
Owned & self-operated	93.6	94.3
Leased in	4.1	1.8
Otherwise	14.3	3.9
Total	100.0	100.0
Source: Primary Survey, 2018		

*Figures are not mutually exclusive.

Operational Holding

Further, we find that most of the Adivasi agricultural households in our survey featured in the category of marginal operational holdings (88 percent) i.e. possessing land of 1 hectare or less.^{26,27} It is to be noted here that although 88 percent of Adivasi agricultural households in our survey had marginal operational holdings, more than half of them actually possessed land of less than one acre.²⁸ Notably, like the Agricultural Census 2010-11, we did not find any Adivasi agricultural household under the 'large' category of operational holding (possessing land more than 10 hectares) and found in negligible number for 'medium' category of holdings (possessing land more than four hectares but less than or equal to 10 hectares) in our survey.²⁹

It becomes clear from the above facts that as with the case of the size of ownership holdings, the size of operational holdings was also not favourable for the Adivasis in West Bengal. Only a small section could depend exclusively on it for their sustenance for the entire year. This pattern of marginal holdings is generally true for the whole population of the state as well.³⁰ However, the

26 Operational holding of any household is the techno-economic unit for agricultural production. A household is considered to have two operational holding when two distinct economic units are found engaged in agricultural production. However, it was hardly found in our survey.

27 As per Agricultural Census, the proportion of marginal operational holding was 84 percent for the STs in West Bengal in 2010-11.

28 Disaggregating the agricultural households by Adivasi communities, we find that the agricultural households of *Oraons* and *Kisans* were all falling under the marginal category of holding (see Table A.4.2 in Appendix III). As far as district variation is concerned, all Adivasi agricultural households surveyed in the district of Hugli fell under the marginal category of operational holding (see Table A.4.3 in Appendix III). However, it is difficult to draw any definitive conclusion for it from the sample size.

29 It is to refer here that the proportion of agricultural Households under the categories of 'large' and 'medium' operational holdings was found negligible for all social groups too in Agricultural Census for West Bengal.

30 As per the Agricultural Census of 2010-11, the proportion of marginal operational holdings was 82 percent for all social groups in West Bengal.

irrigation facility enjoyed by other social groups makes their survival easier than that of the Adivasis, making it hard for them to carry out multiple cropping. Only 32 percent of Adivasi operational holdings in our survey were found to have any kind of irrigation facilities (partly or wholly).³¹ Also, among the Adivasi households, the share of irrigated land to the total cultivable area was found to be even lower – 24 percent. With a few exceptions, the districts having higher concentration of STs benefitted the least from the facility of irrigation. It may be worth a mention that the Deep/Mini Tube-well/Shallow/Submersible Pump that reduces the level of underground water was the source of irrigation for the highest proportions of agricultural households in our survey (11 percent) (see Table A.4.4 in Appendix III). Similar findings were reported in the Agricultural Census mentioned above.

Nature and Extent of Dependence

Thus, the small size of ownership/operational holdings and poor irrigation facilities has made it very difficult for the Adivasis in West Bengal to depend upon land for their survival. Only 19 percent of the agricultural households, as per our survey, could depend on their agricultural production to meet the demand for rice for the entire year. This justifies the disagreement between the percentage of households pursuing agricultural production (57%) and the share of households depending upon it as their principal source of income (28%). The Santals along with the Lepchas and Ravas were ahead of all in pursuing agricultural production as the principal source of income (47% each) (see Table A.4.11 in Appendix III). As high as 50 percent of the agricultural households, in our survey, was pursuing agricultural activity as a subsidiary activity for survival. Apprehending this situation, the Dhebar Commission warned long ago that the single-crop areas with the possibility of continuous fragmentation of land would ruin the Adivasis sooner or later unless adequate facilities for irrigation were made available to them.³²

In the absence of adequate land and necessary facilities for agricultural production, most Adivasi agricultural households were found to produce crops only for their own consumption. Looking at the principal crop they produce, namely rice, we find that while 85 percent of Adivasi agricultural households cultivated rice in our survey, the proportion of households producing it primarily for sale was only a meager one percent. Even if we add those households that produced

31 The corresponding figure in Agricultural Census was, however, higher than this – 48 percent in 2010-11. But the proportion of operational holding having any irrigation facility was 71 percent for all social groups in the same Agricultural Census for West Bengal i.e. substantially higher than for the STs. See GoI, MoAFW (2015).

32 As cited by Elwin (1963).

rice both for consumption and sale, the proportion only becomes 11 percent. On the other hand, the proportion of agricultural households producing rice primarily for consumption was 74 percent (see Table 4.3). Looking at the second most important produce, maize, we find that the proportion of households producing it for sale was negligible. Even the hill Adivasis of North Bengal, viz. Limbu, Tamang and Lepcha who produced maize in higher proportion as compared to other Adivasis of West Bengal, hardly produced it for sale (see Table A.4.5 in Appendix III).

Table 4.3. Distribution of Adivasi agricultural households by production of rice and by community (in percent)

Community	Households producing rice	Producing rice			Sample size
		Primarily for consumption	Primarily for sale	For both consumption & sale	
Santal	99.1 (223)	83.6 (188)	0.9 (2)	14.7 (33)	225
Munda	96.8 (30)	87.1 (27)	3.2 (1)	6.5 (2)	31
Bhumij	100.0 (56)	87.5 (49)	0.0 (0)	12.5 (7)	56
Mahali	100.0 (17)	88.2 (15)	0.0 (0)	11.8 (2)	17
Kora	97.9 (46)	80.9 (38)	2.1 (1)	14.9 (7)	47
Lodha-Kharia	88.2 (15)	88.2 (15)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Savar	77.8 (7)	77.8 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9
Orao	60.0 (6)	60.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10
Kisan	33.3 (5)	33.3 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	15
Limbu	60.0 (9)	46.7 (7)	13.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	15
Tamang	20.0 (4)	15.0 (3)	5.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	20
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	5.3 (1)	5.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	19
Lepcha	48.0 (12)	48.0 (12)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	25
Mech	52.4 (11)	42.9 (9)	0.0 (0)	9.5 (2)	21
Rava	100.0 (26)	100.0 (26)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	26
Bediya	100.0 (14)	78.6 (11)	0.0 (0)	21.4 (3)	14
All	85.0 (482)	73.9 (419)	1.2 (7)	9.9 (56)	567

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

However, it is not that producing crops for sale is not within the realm of preferred livelihood strategies of Adivasi households. Let us take a case:

Jiten Mandi of Boro Kadam in Purulia had in his possession nearly one acre of agricultural land of which he owned only 18 *katha* (30 decimal). The rest of the land was leased in from a Mahato household of his village on a share-cropping basis. In the absence of any irrigation facilities for most part of his land, he could produce rice only once in

a year. But making use of some irrigation facilities that a check dam nearby made available, he could produce vegetables for six months in a year primarily for sale.

Similarly, Bishu Hembram of Satgachhia in Bardhaman district, possessing 2.5 *bigha* (83 decimal) of agricultural land of a neighbour of his village as a share-cropper, was producing potatoes in addition to rice, primarily for sale taking advantage of a submersible facility for irrigation.

Adivasi households that combined sale and consumption of potatoes constituted a little higher proportion (six percent) than the ones that produced it only for consumption (five percent) (see Table A.4.6 in Appendix III). Groups like Santals and Koras were the principal potato growers in South Bengal for commercial purposes, though the overall share of potato producing households was found to be low in our survey (11%). This, however, suggests that the Adivasis would certainly make full use of any opportunity to produce crops for sale, if they received the necessary support for the same.

The commercial intent behind the production of crops is evident from the practices of production of cardamom or betel nuts that we found among the Adivasis of North Bengal. While the Lepchas in Darjeeling district were mostly found to cultivate cardamom (68%) in a commercial mode, the Meches in



Back bending labour: Dukpas of Buxaduar

Jalpaiguri district were found engaged in the production of betel nuts for a similar purpose (76%) (see Table A.4.7 and Table A.4.8 in the Appendix III). While terrace cultivation for commercial production of cardamom was a common practice among the Lepchas in Kalimpong, the plantation of betel nut around the Adivasi houses was a common picture for the Meches or Ravas in Dooars. When we look at the Adivasis of the Sundarbans, we find that the households involved in pisciculture (three percent of the total households and 34% of the households in the Sundarbans in the district of North 24 Parganas) were practicing it mainly for sale (along with consumption).^{33,34} But the constraints of agricultural production have kept them tied to mostly a subsistence economy, disabling them from transiting into a surplus generating economy.

Consequence of Constraints of Land Utilisation

Facing such constraints of agricultural production along with the input-intensive (modern technology based) agricultural crisis, a section of the Adivasis in the Sundarbans has been leasing out their land, practically surrendering to the crisis. Altogether, nearly three percent of the Adivasi households in our survey were found to lease out their land fully or partly.³⁵ A majority of these households (54%) hailed from Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district that falls under the Sundarbans and 35 percent of these leasing out households were *Bediya* households. We actually find an increasing tendency among the Adivasis of the Sundarbans to lease out their land to non-Adivasis for fishery while allowing the latter to transform it into a '*Bheri*.'

Basanti Sardar of Darirjangal in the Sundarbans has leased out all of her agricultural land—two *bighas* (67 decimal)—to non-Adivasis of her locality for transforming it into a '*Bheri*.' In response to our query whether any Adivasi was leasing in land for making a '*Bheri*,' she promptly replied that it was not the Adivasis but the Muslims who were taking lease of these lands (*Adivasira nebe!! Sob Mollara nichchhe*).

On many occasions, this leasing out of land happens under pressure. As Siuli

33 Following the methodology of the Agricultural Census, pisciculture was kept outside of our consideration for classifying a household as an agricultural household.

34 The growing tendency among the Adivasis to produce cash crops was identified by K S Singh in some parts of Gujarat, Rajasthan, Andhra Pradesh, Odisha, and Bihar (present Jharkhand) [see Singh (1982)]. Again, at the beginning of this century, the Bhuria Commission reported that the trend found among the Adivasis, particularly in central India and in the Himalayan range, with respect to food production was in line with profit making [see GoI (2004)].

35 On an average, the area leased out by an Adivasi household was found to be 1.010 acre in our survey which was 0.818 acre in the National Sample Survey of 2003. See GoI, MoSPI(2006).

Sardar of Bholakhali in the Sundarbans said, they did not want to lease out their land but excessive pressure was exerted on them to do so. To compel the Adivasis to lease out their land, saline river water was let in in an underhand manner in some cases into the agricultural lands.³⁶ This pattern of tenancy indicates a disconcerting future for the Adivasis of the Sundarbans. The incidents of land alienation that happened in the case of Arjun Sardar or Sunil Sardar in the Sundarbans or in the case of Ratan Mahali in Purulia, due to mortgaging of their land to non-Adivasis, have not faded from their memory.^{37,38} There exists every possibility of alienation of land as a result of such leasing out of agricultural land for *Bheris*.

Hence, either due to alienation of land or due to small size of holdings devoid of irrigation facilities, land as a source of livelihood has lost its traditional importance for most Adivasis in West Bengal. Unless there is strong support from the state to improve the agrarian conditions of the Adivasis in West Bengal, with accompanying policy changes to avoid alienation from their land, the Adivasis in West Bengal will perhaps be left only with the memory of their farming past and their spiritual connection with land.

4.3 Forest: Dependence and Ceasing Rights

Just like land, the forest was also traditionally an important source of livelihood for the Adivasis in West Bengal. Adivasis such as the Lodhas, Kharias or Savars, traditionally believed to be hunting and food gathering Adivasis, were found to depend on forests to a considerable extent for their survival even at the end of the last century in West Bengal.³⁹ Most of the settled agriculturist Adivasis also depend on forests to a significant extent for their livelihood and survival needs in West Bengal. Indeed, Adivasi life is closely connected with forests for living in general, and for food, fuel, medicine and fodder in particular. Income from Non-Timber Forest Produce was found to constitute a major part of total income of the forest-fringe villagers in some areas of erstwhile Medinipur and Bankura districts.⁴⁰ But the policy of forest conservancy pursued since

³⁶ The river water in Sundarban areas is of saline nature due to its proximity to the sea.

³⁷ Alienation of land from Adivasis to non-Adivasis is still going on, but at a relatively low pace: seven households in our survey were found to be victims of alienation from their land in the last 30 years.

³⁸ In this context it will not be irrelevant to mention that two households in Dooars were reportedly alienated from their land due to expansion of tea gardens in the last two decades. The number of households that lost their land due to public works was 12 in our survey in the last two decades. Most of these alienations took place due to construction of roads.

³⁹ Singh (1997) and Sinha (1982)

⁴⁰ Dutta et al (2004)

the latter half of the 19th century and the reduced forest cover resulting from various ‘development’ projects in post-Independence India have deprived the Adivasis from this source of livelihood to a large extent, and West Bengal is no exception in this respect. Following the changes in recorded land in West Bengal since 1951, it was found that there was a substantial increase in the recorded ‘forest land’ under the control of the Forest Department since 1951 and this trend continued till 1971. While ‘forest land’ under the control of the Forest Department was 6990 sq. km. in 1951, it increased to 11879 sq. km. in 1971, thus amounting to a 70 percent increase in 20 years.⁴¹ However, it was the ‘protected forest’ that increased most in this period – from 17 sq. km. in 1951 to 3772 sq. km. in 1971.⁴² Actually, the change in the ownership claim of forests that took place in south West Bengal after the abolition of the *zamindari* system has had an important bearing on this massive increase in government ‘forest land’ in West Bengal.⁴³ All of recorded ‘forest land’ in West Bengal ultimately came under the control of the Forest Department by 1971. Significantly, as in many other states, most of the notified ‘forest land’ in West Bengal was found to be ‘reserved forest’ where restrictions imposed on people are more stringent, to keep them away from the forest: 59 percent of the notified ‘forest land’ in West Bengal was found to be ‘reserved’ in 1971 and afterwards.⁴⁴ We can thus understand how little the Adivasis of West Bengal could utilise the forest resources as a means of their livelihood in the post-Independence period. Also, there was a considerable decline in recorded ‘forest land’ in West Bengal in the period between 1951 and 1971. While the total recorded ‘forest land’ in West Bengal was 12,255 sq. km. in 1951, the corresponding figure in 1971 was found to be 11,879 sq. km.⁴⁵ The development projects that were undertaken in this period - viz. the Kangsabati Canal System, the Hindustan Steel Project, etc. - were an important reason for this decline, leading to absolute alienation of the Adivasis from these forests.⁴⁶ Besides this, Ramachandra Guha drew our attention to another aspect of alienation of the Adivasis from forestlands in the post-colonial period. He pointed out that the growth of forest industry had a devastating consequence for the ecology and livelihoods of the forest dwellers in post-Independence India, as it promoted monoculture by replacing mixed tropical hardwood species with man-made forests of desirable species such as eucalyptus, tropical pines, and teak to meet the growing demand of commerce

41 GoWB (No date¹)

42 Protected forests imply that all activities are permitted unless prohibited, whereas reserved forests entail that all activities are prohibited unless permitted.

43 GoWB (No date²) and Pattnaik & Dutta (1997)

44 GoWB (No date¹)

45 Ibid

46 Pattnaik and Dutta (1997)

and modern industry.⁴⁷ In line with this policy of forest industry, the plantation of eucalyptus hybrid with associates like Akashmoni (*Acacia auriculiformis*) and Minjiri (*Cassia siamea*) started to take place in lateritic tracts of south West Bengal to supply the raw material to wood-based industries.⁴⁸ Thus, the dual problem of alienation from forest due to conservancy of forest on the one hand, and the growth of forest industry on the other, has left little scope for the Adivasis in West Bengal to depend on the forest for their survival.

Extent and Pattern of Forest Dependence

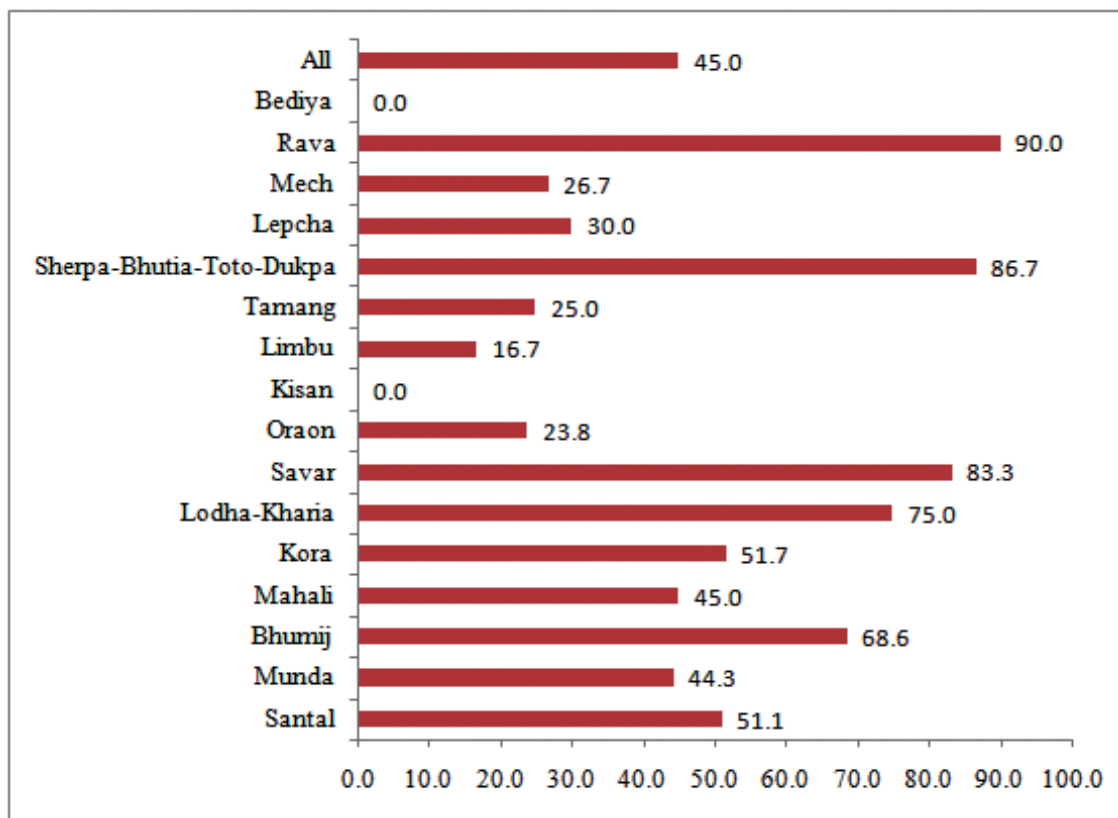
About 45 percent of Adivasi households in our survey were found to depend on forests in some way or another for their survival. Looking at the variation among the Adivasis in this regard, we find that the Totos and Dukpas stand out in this regard (all surveyed households dependent on the forest) followed by the Lodhas (97% households dependent on the forest). But, as the Totos and the Dukpas are clubbed with some other Adivasis, viz. Bhutias and Sherpas, in the Census and Lodhas are clubbed with the Kharias in the same way, following the Census methodology we find that the Ravas are apparently depending the most on the forest for their survival (90%) followed by the group of Bhutias-Sherpas-Totos-Dukpas (87%) (see Figure 4.2). Although Kharias are believed to be traditionally a hunting and food gathering Adivasi community like the Lodhas, a substantial proportion of the Kharia population in West Bengal is found to reside in the *coolie* lines of Tea Gardens to work as plantation workers. Hence, the dependence of the Lodha-Kharia group on the forest has been considerably lower than that of some other Adivasi communities in West Bengal. However, none of the Bediya and the Kisan households in our survey was found to be dependent upon the forestlands for their survival. Indeed, there was no forest in the vicinity of the villages selected for the survey of the Bediya Adivasi; on the other hand, the Kisans were hardly found in and around the forests in West Bengal.⁴⁹ Thus, none of the Bediya or Kisan households in our survey had any forest-based livelihood opportunity.

47 Guha (2012)

48 GoWB (No date³)

49 Most of the Kisans in West Bengal, as per Census 2011, were residing in Malda district (94 percent) that is almost devoid of any forests. As per the records of the Government of West Bengal, not even one percent of the geographical area of the district was recorded as forestland in Malda (GoWB, No date¹).

Figure 4.2. Dependence of various Adivasi communities on forests in West Bengal (in percent)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

It is important to note that the Adivasis residing mainly in North Bengal (other than Ravas and Bhutias-Sherpas-Totos-Dukpas) showed a relatively lower level of forest dependence as compared to their counterparts in South Bengal. Again, forest dependence among Lepchas, Limbus, Tamangs, Mechs, and Oraons was lower than that of the average of all Adivasis in this regard (see Figure 4.2). This is a somewhat surprising finding, because the ratio of recorded 'forest land' to the total geographical area is higher for the districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, peopled with the North Bengal Adivasis than for the South Bengal districts, inhabited mainly by Bhumijis, Santals, Koras, Savars and Lodhas.⁵⁰ The Mundas and the Mahalis, residing in both North Bengal and South Bengal in comparable proportions, have a dependence on forests quite similar to the overall average. Importantly, the variation in forest dependence among diverse Adivasi groups might have some link with inter-district variations in the share of 'reserved forests': while most of the recorded 'forest land' in Darjeeling

⁵⁰ While the share of recorded 'forest land' to the total geographical area was 38 and 29 percent respectively for the erstwhile districts of Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri in North Bengal, the corresponding figures for erstwhile Medinipur, Purulia and Bankura in South Bengal were 12, 14 and 22 percent respectively. See GoWB (No date¹).

and Jalpaguri districts has been converted into a ‘reserved forest’—93 and 83 percent respectively, only a small proportion of ‘forest land’ in Medinipur, Purulia and Bankura districts has been similarly transformed —0.5 percent, 13 percent, and five percent respectively.⁵¹ In other words, and this time not surprisingly, wherever there are more stringent restrictions on people’s entry into the forest, forest dependence is lower among the Adivasis; the converse is also true. We found little self-confidence among the Adivasis of North Bengal, whether it was the Adivasis of tea gardens or of revenue villages, to enter the forest. Sunil Lepcha of present Kalimpong district reported that ‘they’ did not dare to go to the forest for collection of any forest produce. He said that the Forest Department personnel demand money even for the collection of dry twigs and branches. The only exception to this rule was the Ravas or the Totos - the residents of ‘Forest Villages’ in our sample.⁵² Despite reports of harassment by Forest officials, they could not be restrained from entering the forest to eke out a living.

Whatever the extent of dependence of the Adivasis on the forest, they were found to depend upon it mainly for collection of forest produce. All forest dependent households (except one) were found to collect forest produce to meet various survival necessities. The proportion of households depending on forests for grazing their animals was also not low. A little higher than one third of the forest dependent households were found to graze their cattle in forests in the vicinity of their habitations (see Table A.4.9 in Appendix III). As far as the practice of hunting is considered, it was hardly reported to be practiced by any household in our survey except a few. Only five percent of the reference households (one ninth of the forest dependent households) reported hunting game to meet their requirement of food. Under-reporting may be a reason behind this, as hunting animals is legally prohibited. However, Savars were found to hunt game more than their counterparts: more than one third of the Savar households reported hunting game for food. None of the North Bengal Adivasis reported any cases of hunting for food (see Table A.4.9 in the Appendix III).

Although the forest dependent households were relying on forests mainly for collection of forest produce, firewood was found to be the main item of collection (44% of all the forest reliant households) followed by Sal leaves (22%). Firewood was collected either for consumption only or for both consumption and sale while Sal leaves were collected mainly for sale. A considerable proportion

51 GoWB (No date¹)

52 Forest villages are Adivasi colonies developed by the Forest Department in order to engage the Adivasis in various types of work, for example, survey and demarcation, felling and extraction of trees, road-making, plantation, etc., in the interior of the forest.

of households were found to be collecting various types of fruits, vegetables and flowers for food (17%). The Savars, followed by the Lodha-Kharias, were the principal users of the Minor Forest Produce (MFP) such as sal leaf, kendu leaf, mohul flower/seed, honey, medicinal plants, and so on (see Table 4.4).⁵³ It appears that the Adivasi groups, believed to be traditionally reliant on hunting and gathering, were still trying to survive by drawing substantially from forest resources. In general, the Adivasis residing in South Bengal were found to gather MFP more than their counterparts in North Bengal. Hardly any Adivasi group in North Bengal was found to gather MFP from the forest. However, the unavailability of MFP is also an issue to reckon with.

Rebati Rava of the Khairbari Forest in Jalpaiguri district stated that hardly any MFP was found these days in forests close to their village: only cane was available for making baskets and cane shoots or mushrooms for consumption. Similarly, Ramesh Toto of Totopara in the same district stated that Soap Berry/Nut (*Sapindussaponaria*) was one of the important forest produce available earlier but now appears to be scarce. Nirmal Sardar of Mangla village in Purulia district lamented that various types of fruits that could stave off hunger and starvation before are rarely found in present times due to the depletion of forests.

Degradation of forests and monoculture plantation have led to this situation. Commenting on the decline in production of honey in the Simlipal forest of Odisha, Savyasaachi claimed that in the name of conservation, the Simlipal Tiger Project had undermined the very health of the forest, resulting in depleted production of honey.⁵⁴ The Committee on Minor Forest Produce constituted by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj at the end of the last decade admitted that MFP in India was dwindling over time.⁵⁵ Thus, forest-based livelihood opportunities for the Adivasis in West Bengal have been diminishing slowly as in many other parts of the country. Dikshit Sinha identified this problem in the last century while studying the Kharias in Purulia. He found that out of 21 original varieties of edible roots and tubers, only seven were available in the study area. He further added that honey and fruits, once abundantly available in forests, had become rare.⁵⁶ This is why, although the Savars, Lodhas, and Kharias were found to collect MFP more than their counterparts in our survey, they could

53 As far as Sal leaf is concerned Lodhas were ahead of all Adivasis in collection of Sal leaf but due to Census methodology of clubbing, Savars appear to be ahead of Lodha-Kharias in this regard.

54 Savyasaachi (2016)

55 GoI, MoPR (2011)

56 Sinha (1982)

not substantially depend on it now for their survival.⁵⁷ Therefore, although 45 percent of the households in our survey were dependent on forests for their survival, the proportion of households depending on forest resources for their principal source of livelihood was a meagre three percent (see Table A.4.11 in Appendix III). This crisis of MFP has been pushing some Adivasi households in South Bengal into the trap of non-Adivasi timber business groups engaged in felling of trees for commercial purposes. Faced with the crisis of livelihood, these people have often been desperate in their dealings with the state laws. As Dilip Savar, a 30-year old adult of Ranibandh block of Bankura, surviving on MFP for all these years admitted: whatever might be the legal consequences, they couldn't but collect and sell firewood for their survival.⁵⁸ However, it is very clear from the above discussion that the forest has become mainly a source of firewood for the Adivasis in West Bengal. The forest as a subsidiary economy, to a large extent, has at present lost its significance for them. The Adivasis traditionally reliant on hunting and gathering have been worst hit by this crisis, caused mainly by two apparently opposite drives of the conservancy of forests and commercial forestry, leading to premature deaths as a result of starvation.

57 The low exchange value for the MFP is also an unfavourable factor for the Adivasis to depend on it for their survival. The above said Committee on Minor Forest Produce maintained that the Adivasis had no option but to sell MFP in low prices. Drawing from our village survey data, we have found disproportionately low returns from a major MFP collected by the Adivasis of West Bengal, namely the Sal (*Shorea robusta*) leaf: Collection and stitching of 7000 leaves (100 sheets each having seven leaves) needed, in Jangalmahal comprising parts of Paschim Medinipur, Bankura and Purulia districts, seven hours on an average, but the proceedings of the produces could hardly make on an average a sum of Rs 86.

58. While discussing the food situation among the so called Primitive Adivasi Groups and other forest dependent communities, Meena Radhakrishna pointed out that these communities become offenders against forest laws out of the sheer desperation of postponing starvation. See Radhakrishna (2012).

Table 4.4. Distribution of Adivasi households by type of forest produce collected and by community (in percent)												
Community	Households collecting any forest produce	Type of forest produce								Sample size		
		Firewood	Timber	Bamboo	Sal leaf	Kendu leaf	Mohul	Honey	Medicinal plants	Fruits, vegetables etc	Others	
Santal	50.7 (142)	49.3 (138)	24.6 (69)	0.4 (1)	40.0 (112)	21.1 (59)	10.4 (29)	0.0 (0)	6.8 (19)	25.0 (70)	1.1 (3)	280
Munda	44.3 (31)	44.3 (31)	27.1 (19)	2.9 (2)	25.7 (18)	11.4 (8)	4.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (7)	22.9 (16)	0.0 (0)	70
Bhumij	68.6 (48)	68.6 (48)	41.4 (29)	1.4 (1)	34.3 (24)	37.1 (26)	8.6 (6)	4.3 (3)	8.6 (6)	24.3 (17)	2.9 (2)	70
Mahali	45.0 (18)	45.0 (18)	12.5 (5)	2.5 (1)	10.0 (4)	2.5 (1)	2.5 (1)	0.0 (0)	2.5 (1)	12.5 (5)	0.0 (0)	40
Kora	51.7 (31)	51.7 (31)	23.3 (14)	0.0 (0)	20.0 (12)	15.0 (9)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	5.0 (3)	18.3 (11)	1.7 (1)	60
Lodha-Kharria	75.0 (45)	75.0 (45)	55.0 (33)	3.3 (2)	53.3 (32)	33.3 (20)	16.7 (10)	3.3 (2)	18.3 (11)	30.0 (18)	0.0 (0)	60
Savar	83.3 (25)	83.3 (25)	70.0 (21)	23.3 (7)	63.3 (19)	43.3 (13)	43.3 (13)	40.0 (12)	53.3 (16)	66.7 (20)	0.0 (0)	30
Oraon	23.8 (19)	21.2 (17)	2.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	5.0 (4)	1.2 (1)	80
Kisan	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50
Limbu	16.7 (5)	13.3 (4)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (2)	30
Tamang	25.0 (15)	23.3 (14)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (2)	1.7 (1)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	86.7 (26)	86.7 (26)	10.0 (3)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	16.7 (5)	6.7 (2)	30
Lepcha	30.0 (9)	26.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (3)	30
Mech	26.7 (8)	26.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Rava	90.0 (27)	90.0 (27)	23.3 (7)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	6.7 (2)	10.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	30
Bediya	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50
All	44.9 (449)	44.0 (440)	20.3 (203)	1.7 (17)	22.1 (221)	13.6 (136)	6.3 (63)	1.9 (19)	6.6 (66)	17.1 (171)	1.5 (15)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Forest Rights: In Law and in Practice

It is important to note, however, that in order to avoid the above stated fate, Adivasi resistance against alienation from their natural resources kept erupting since the colonial period.⁵⁹ Adivasi resistance to save the forest intensified since the 1970s in various parts of the country— the Chipko movement being the most famous of them.⁶⁰ The Adivasi voice was raised not only for the protection of forests or for the right to collect forest produce but also for their right to ‘forest land,’ for its use for cultivation, residence and grazing.⁶¹ Finally, to address the issue of alienation of Adivasis from the ‘forest,’ and the historical injustice meted out to them by the state itself, The Scheduled Adivasis and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 was enacted. This Act (henceforth referred to as FRA) legalised the Adivasis’ rights on the forest land. It provides the right to the forest dwellers to live in and cultivate the forest land. It ensures a right to grazing and collection of forest produce. It vests a right in the community to protect and conserve the community forest reserves.⁶² However, the implementation of FRA was found to suffer from many shortcomings across the states. The Joint Committee constituted by the Ministry of Adivasi Affairs and Ministry of Environment and Forest in 2010 reported that the implementation of FRA was poor.⁶³ There were serious lacunae in distributing titles for forest land claimed against the community rights.⁶⁴ While implementing the FRA, most of the states were found to have reduced Gram Sabhas to a secondary position.⁶⁵ It is important to point out that the Gram Sabha, as per the FRA, is vested with the basic authority to take the initial decisions on forest claims within the local limit of its jurisdiction.⁶⁶ Noticeably, in West Bengal, the general peoples’ bodies, the Gram Sabhas were replaced by the Panchayati Raj institution Gram Samsads. The essence of instituting Forest Right Committees (FRC) by the people was also compromised in West Bengal by making it subservient to the pre-existing Gram Unnayan Samitees and making provisions for incorporating the Gram Unnayan Samitee member and the Forest Department official as its members.⁶⁷ Thus, at

59 Guha (2012)

60 Sarin (2016)

61 The concept of forest land as classified by the Forest Departments in India was actually an erroneous conception that included even those lands that were cultivated by the forest dwellers for long. See Vasani (2016).

62 GoI, MoI (2007).

63 As cited by GoI, MoTA (2014).

64 Reddy et al (2012)

65 Sarin (2016)

66 GoI, MoI (2007)

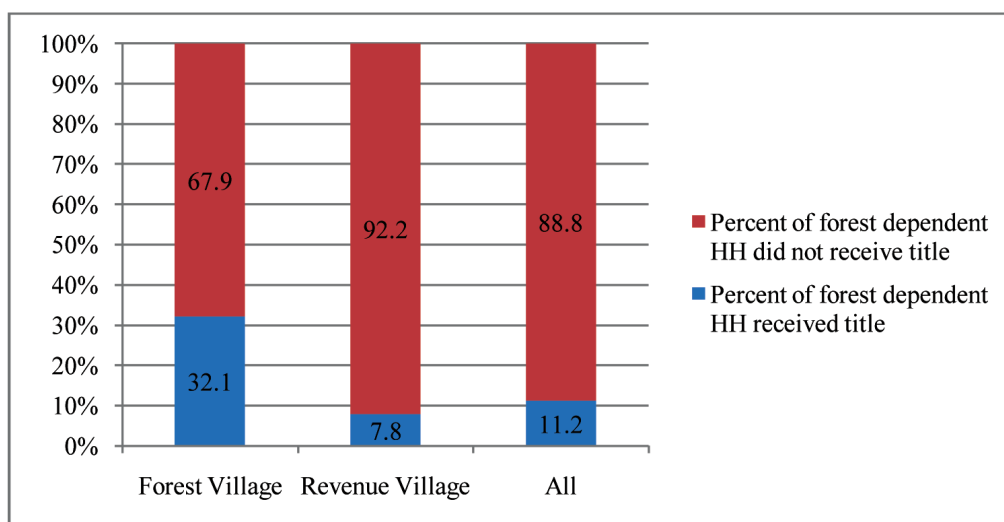
67 Jha (2010) and Ghosh et al (2017)

the very beginning of its implementation process, the FRA had lost much of its content in West Bengal. Beginning its implementation in 2008, the number of individual titles distributed in West Bengal till February 2017 was 44,396 against a total individual claim of 131,962, i.e., one third of the total claims were granted titles in West Bengal.⁶⁸ Our survey data shows that only 11 percent of the forest dependent households residing in revenue villages or Forest Villages (other than tea gardens or cinchona gardens) received titles against their individual claims for forest land. In some villages like Icha Forest (Forest Village) in Kalilmping, none of the inhabitants reportedly received any title. With a sense of frustration about the time and effort that he had spent on securing a title over the 'forest land,' Prempa Sherpa, the secretary of FRC at Icha Forest, remarked, 'I do not have much hope about gaining a title over the forest land (*Abhi utna umid nahi hay*).'⁶⁹ However, Ravas in North Bengal were found to have received the highest number of titles against their individual claims: 44 percent of forest reliant Rava households were found to have received titles against their individual claims for forest land (see Table A.4.10 in Appendix III). Importantly, the percentage of households residing in Forest Villages with titles was 32 percent while it was significantly low in case of the forest dependent households residing in revenue villages (eight percent) (see Figure 4.3). This explained why the Ravas were much ahead of all other Adivasis in receiving titles over forestlands. Thus, it appears from our survey findings that the implementation of the FRA was relatively better in Forest Villages than in the revenue villages situated at the margin of forests. This evidence finds resonance with the observations made by others.⁶⁹ The forest dependent population of tea gardens, however, was found to be completely excluded in West Bengal from the implementation process of FRA. Surprisingly, hardly any forest dependent households other than those receiving titles were found to have claimed the title for 'forest land.' While 11 percent of the forest dependent households were found to have received the title, the proportion of households claiming the title was only three percent more than that (see Table 4.5). Even worse, as high as 86 percent of the forest dependent households in our survey were found to be completely unaware of the FRA.

68 GoI, MoTA (2017)

69 See Ghosh et al (2017).

Figure 4.3. Share of forest dependent Adivasi households having title for 'forest land' against individual claims in Forest Villages and Revenue Villages in West Bengal (in percent)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Table 4.5. Share of forest dependent Adivasi households having received titles against individual claims for forest land and knowledge about FRA (in percent)

Households receiving Titles	Households claiming for Titles	Knowledge about FRA*					Sample size#
		Completely unaware	Right to cultivate forest land	Right to live in forest land	Right to forest produce	Right to grazing	
11.2	13.9	85.6	2.0	3.5	6.9	5.0	403

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

* Figures are not mutually exclusive

Forest dependent households residing in tea gardens or cinchona gardens are excluded

The information gap that was found to prevail among the Adivasis in West Bengal regarding FRA was primarily due to the reluctance of the concerned departments to organise the Gram Sabhas and the Forest Right Committees (FRC) rigorously for the proper implementation of the Act. Let us look at an example:

While talking to Subodh Mahali of Sirka village in Purulia district, we came to know that the Forest department officials formed the FRC in their village quite casually upon talking to a few individuals residing in the main hamlet of the village. Neither were all the villagers called for the meeting nor did the officials visit all the hamlets of the villages. The committee did not do much to spread awareness among the villagers regarding their user rights to the forest land.

Only 16 percent of the forest dependent households (except in the tea gardens or Cinchona gardens) in our survey reported about any Gram Sabha meetings that were held in their village for the purpose of setting up the FRC. None of the study districts were found to be performing well in this regard. However, the proportion of forest dependent households reporting that ‘Gram Sabhas were held’ was the highest in Bankura – constituting 30 percent of the forest dependent households (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6. District-wise distribution of forest dependent Adivasi households reporting that Gram Sabhas were held for FRC (in percent)

District	Proportion of Households reporting Gram Sabha held (in percent)	Sample size*
Darjeeling	20.0	30
Jalpaiguri	26.4	53
Malda	---	0
Birbhum	0.0	4
Bardhaman	0.0	21
Hugli	---	0
Bankura	30.2	53
Purulia	11.1	81
PaschimMedinipur	11.2	161
North 24 Parganas	---	0
All	15.6	403

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

* Forest dependent households residing in tea gardens are excluded from this calculation.

It is not surprising that widespread lack of knowledge among the Adivasis about their community rights over ‘forest land’ would almost be a natural correlation of such a weak implementation process. A report mentioned that in West Bengal, the Joint Forest Management (JFM), was rather inaccurately cited by the Government as an instance of community right over ‘forest land.’⁷⁰ Our survey reveals that a huge proportion of the forest dependent households that belonged to JFM committees received the share of income from timber in the past owing to their membership of these bodies; however these membership-driven claims were quite different from community claims over ‘forest land,’ which the government apparently is reluctant to acknowledge in West Bengal.

70 See Ghosh et al (2017).



Handcrafting livelihood: Mahali man making bamboo products

Madhu Sarin argued that the forest bureaucracy is making every effort to subsume community forest resource management within its JFM framework.⁷¹ Since the introduction of FRA, there is no legitimacy of JFM committees, at least in areas where definitional problems do not arise as far as the implementation of the FRA is concerned: the Act does not make any room for collaboration between the Forest Department and the community to protect the forest. Rather, it empowers the Gram Sabha to control and manage their own forest.⁷²

Thus, we find that neither in the case of individual right nor in the case of community right over 'forest land' has the state of West Bengal been an example as far as the actualisation of the FRA is concerned. Naturally, as a result of the poor implementation of the FRA, the fate of the Adivasis in West Bengal is still in the hands of the Forest Department officials who were hardly found to play a positive role for the Adivasis in its (department's) history of 150 years. In the absence of ease of access to the natural resources and in a situation of the dwindling health of the forest itself, traditional forest dwellers who are often labeled as encroachers upon their own land are forced to look for alternative livelihood strategies to eke out a living.

⁷¹ Sarin (2016)

⁷² Jha (2010)

4.4 Adivasis: Cheap Source of Labour

The decline in the promises of land and forest as a productive asset and an avenue of subsidiary economy, respectively, has brought about substantial changes in the occupational pattern of the Adivasis in West Bengal. To meet their livelihood needs, almost all Adivasis of West Bengal engaged themselves in wage labour – as either agricultural or non-agricultural labourers. Whether it was the settled agriculturist Adivasis like Santals or Bhumijis or the hunting-gathering people like Lodhas or Kharia Savars, most of them engaged themselves in agricultural wage labour, along with their traditional occupations of cultivation, forestry and such.⁷³ The Oraons (another settled agriculturist Adivasi group), having been alienated from their land in present-day Jharkhand, became a ‘*tea tribe*’ in the colonial period itself; they immigrated to North Bengal in large numbers to work as plantation labourers. Sharit K Bhowmik showed that the most numerous communities among the tea garden coolies in Dooars at the beginning of the last century were Oraons and Mundas.⁷⁴

In order to survive, the Santals from South West Bengal used to migrate seasonally to the rice fields of the Bengal plains since the colonial period to work as agricultural labourers. The number of these seasonal migrants increased rapidly from the mid-1980s due to improvement in agricultural productivity in destination points.⁷⁵ The engagement of the Adivasis in mining work that took place much before the Independence of India is another example of the dependence of the Adivasis on wage labour in West Bengal for their survival.⁷⁶ However, no other new occupation than casual wage labour was found available to absorb labour surplus that was caused due to the loss of traditional livelihood options for the Adivasis in West Bengal. In fact, Adivasis are hardly found in jobs other than very menial ones in our country. They work either as agricultural labourers in rural areas or as non-agricultural casual workers in construction sites, brick kilns, and so on in urban areas.⁷⁷ Around the industrial sites, Adivasis are mostly engaged in menial and highly hazardous jobs even in the public sector enterprise.⁷⁸ As per the National Sample Survey report of 2011-12, 62 percent of the Adivasi households in rural areas of West Bengal were found to be dependent on casual wage labour as the major source of their household

73 There was a vivid description of the occupational distribution of various Adivasis in the People of India report, ‘*The Scheduled Tribes*’, of Anthropological Survey of India. For detail, see Singh (1997).

74 Bhowmik (2016)

75 Mazumdar (2016) and Rogaly (1999)

76 Elwin (1963)

77 Mazumdar (2016) and Mosse et al (2016)

78 See Strumpell (2016) to get an idea about the tribal workers in the Rourkela Steel Plant.

income, while their share in regular wage and salaried employment was only eight percent.⁷⁹ The corresponding figures in our survey were 53 and five percent respectively (see Table A.4.11 in Appendix III).

Shifting Away from Agriculture

As per Census data, the proportion of agricultural labourers among the Adivasis in West Bengal was 58 percent in 2011. No state other than Bihar (70%) had a higher share of agricultural labourers among the Adivasis in the country in 2011. On the other hand, the proportion of cultivators in 2011 was 12 percent for the Adivasis in West Bengal. In the same way, no state other than Kerala (nine percent) had a lower share of cultivators among the Adivasis as compared to West Bengal in 2011. As far as rural areas are concerned, the shares of agricultural labourers and cultivators were 61 and 13 percent respectively for Adivasis in West Bengal in 2011. Notably, the corresponding shares for all social groups in West Bengal were 41 and 21 percent respectively for the same year for the rural areas. There was a continuous increase in the share of agricultural labourers among the Adivasis in West Bengal in contrast to a simultaneously continuous decline in the share of cultivators until 2011. In the period between 1961 and 1971, in particular, there was a steep rise in the share of agricultural labourers among the Adivasis (from 29 percent to 49 percent) in contrast to the corresponding and steep decline in the share of cultivators among them (from 50% to 31%) in West Bengal.⁸⁰

However, in sharp contrast to the Census finding of 61 percent of agricultural labourers among them, only 22 percent of the Adivasi working population in our survey were found to be agricultural labourers; 27 percent of the Adivasi working population in our survey were found to be cultivators, in contrast to the corresponding figure of 13 percent in the Population Census 2011 (see Table 4.7 and Table A.S.4.2 in Appendix II). Although some differences, and even limitations, in our sampling methods cannot be ruled out as a possible source of such variations in relevant estimates, we argue that our estimates also indicate some basic changes in Adivasi occupational patterns that have taken place in the rural areas of West Bengal, especially in terms of their agricultural activities. Indeed, we find a substantial proportion of non-agricultural labourers among the Adivasis in rural areas of West Bengal: 21 percent of the Adivasi

⁷⁹ Notably, as per the National Sample Survey, the proportion of households engaged in casual wage labour, as principal source of income, was 47 per cent for all social groups in rural West Bengal in 2011-12 i.e. 15 per cent lower than that for the STs. See GoI, MoSPI (2015).

⁸⁰ It indicates nothing but a large scale land alienation of the Adivasis in West Bengal in this period.

working population was found to be non-agricultural labourers in our survey. Notably, plantation workers who constituted 13 percent of the Adivasi working population in our survey are excluded from these non-agricultural labourers (see Table 4.7). One of the reasons for such an incomparable ratio of non-agricultural labourers was the lower availability of agricultural work (for hired labour) in and around selected villages in our survey. Due to the predominance of small operational holdings among the Adivasis and their tradition of family-labour-dependent agricultural production, the opportunity for getting agricultural work on a hired basis was little in many villages situated in areas with a relatively higher concentration of Adivasi population. To illustrate:

While the Adivasis of Panpa village of Pandua block in Hugli district found quite a bit of agricultural work for themselves as labourers in and around their village due to a lower concentration of the Adivasi population in their area, the Adivasis of Nekra-anchra village of Binpur II block in Paschim Medinipur district hardly got any agricultural work (as labourers) in and around their village, as there is a higher concentration of Adivasi population in their area: the share of Adivasis to total population in rural areas of Pandua and Binpur II blocks was 18 and 41 percent respectively for its rural areas in 2011 while the corresponding figures for Panpa and Nekra-anchra villages was 41 and 100 percent respectively. In case of the Sundarbans, due to the conversion of agricultural lands into *Bheri*, the opportunity for agricultural work had reduced substantially and consequently, the Adivasis had no option but to seek for non-agricultural work there. In the cheerless words of Rupali Sardar of Darirjangal in Sundarban, 'We used to work earlier in the rice field, but due to its conversion into *Bheri* there is no such work available to us any more' (*Aage mather kaj kortam. Kintu ekhon mather kaj nei. Sob to Bheri boyegelo!*).

Availability of non-agricultural work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) was also an important contributor to the rise in share of non-agricultural labour. As per our survey, 39 percent of the Adivasi households were provided with jobs under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREG) schemes in the last year preceding the survey, with 31 person days for each household on average. A decline among the Adivasis in seasonal migration to rice fields of West Bengal that we observe in our field visits has something to do with the job available under the MGNREG schemes.⁸¹ Along with other reasons, the MGNREGA and the National Food Security Act, 2013 in general have enhanced their food

81 Of course, this is not the only reason for the decline in seasonal migration to rice fields of West Bengal.

Table 4.7. Distribution of Adivasi workers in West Bengal by primary occupation and by community (in percent)

Community	Agri Labor	Non-Agri Labour	Plantation Work (all type)	Cultivator (all type)	Crafts (Household Industry)	Independent Professional (Private tutor etc)	Regular Wage or Salaried Employee	Self-Employment other than cultivation and crafts	Gathering Forest Produces (all types)	Stone collection or Fishing	Other	Sample size
Santal	31.2 (231)	16.7 (124)	2.4 (18)	43.0 (319)	0.3 (2)	0.1 (1)	1.3 (10)	1.6 (12)	1.8 (13)	0.0 (0)	1.5 (11)	741
Munda	13.6 (20)	23.1 (34)	29.9 (44)	19.0 (28)	2.0 (3)	0.7 (1)	2.0 (3)	3.4 (5)	5.4 (8)	0.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	147
Bhumij	31.8 (54)	19.4 (33)	0.0 (0)	33.5 (57)	4.1 (7)	0.0 (0)	2.4 (4)	1.2 (2)	5.9 (10)	1.8 (3)	0.0 (0)	170
Mahali	12.9 (13)	14.9 (15)	24.8 (25)	6.9 (7)	32.7 (33)	0.0 (0)	5.0 (5)	1.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	2.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	101
Kora	35.9 (55)	20.9 (32)	0.0 (0)	35.3 (54)	0.0 (0)	1.3 (2)	3.9 (6)	1.3 (2)	1.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	153
Lodha-Kharria	22.2 (30)	16.3 (22)	17.8 (24)	6.7 (9)	0.0 (0)	0.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30.4 (41)	5.2 (7)	0.7 (1)	135
Savar	40.5 (34)	10.7 (9)	4.8 (4)	4.8 (4)	4.8 (4)	0.0 (0)	1.2 (1)	2.4 (2)	31.0 (26)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	84
Orao	2.1 (4)	15.7 (30)	66.5 (127)	1.6 (3)	0.5 (1)	0.5 (1)	7.9 (15)	4.7 (9)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.5 (1)	191
Kisan	41.4 (41)	38.4 (38)	1.0 (1)	14.1 (14)	0.0 (0)	2.0 (2)	1.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	2.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	99
Limbu	0.0 (0)	24.6 (16)	21.5 (14)	24.6 (16)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	18.5 (12)	10.8 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	65
Tamang	0.0 (0)	24.4 (31)	25.4 (32)	13.5 (17)	0.0 (0)	0.8 (1)	24.6 (31)	8.7 (11)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.2 (4)	127
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	1.8 (1)	33.3 (19)	5.3 (3)	21.1 (12)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17.5 (10)	17.5 (10)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.5 (2)	57
Lepcha	1.2 (1)	27.5 (22)	0.0 (0)	45.0 (36)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	12.5 (10)	13.8 (11)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	80
Mech	12.7 (7)	14.5 (8)	7.3 (4)	29.1 (16)	0.0 (0)	1.8 (1)	21.8 (12)	10.9 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.8 (1)	55
Rava	13.6 (9)	18.2 (12)	0.0 (0)	42.4 (28)	6.1 (4)	0.0 (0)	6.1 (4)	12.1 (8)	1.5 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	66
Bediya	14.3 (15)	46.7 (49)	0.0 (0)	11.4 (12)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.0 (1)	15.2 (16)	0.0 (0)	11.4 (12)	0.0 (0)	105
All	21.7 (515)	20.8 (494)	12.5 (296)	26.6 (632)	2.3 (54)	0.4 (10)	5.3 (125)	4.3 (102)	4.3 (101)	1.1 (27)	0.8 (20)	2376

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

security and consequently eased somewhat their earlier compulsions to migrate in search of agricultural labour. As Siuli Sardar of Nekra-anchra put it,

Earlier there was severe crisis of food, hence we used to go for *namal*. But at present the crisis has got lessened to a considerable extent; hence, we are not required to go for *namal* (*Aage kbaoar bodo kosto chhilo, tai namal jetam. Ekbhon oto kosto nai, tai ar jai na*).

Perhaps the most important reason for the rise in non-agricultural labour among the Adivasis in West Bengal was large scale temporary migration on their part to other states in India in search of off-farm labour: 30 percent of the non-agricultural labourers in our survey were found to have gone to other states of the country for non-agricultural work. Another 17 percent of non-agricultural labourers were found to have migrated to places within the state boundary for non-agricultural work. This trend of out-migration resonates with the migration pattern of the Adivasis in the bordering areas of south Rajasthan, western Madhya Pradesh and eastern Gujarat.⁸² It is worth mentioning here that the North Bengal based Adivasis, unlike their counterparts in South Bengal, were never found to have seasonally migrated for agricultural work. Overall, it may be concluded that the exposure of the Adivasis to the growing opportunities for non-agricultural work in their own localities as well as outside has caused significant changes in the share of non-agricultural work among the Adivasis in West Bengal.

Probing deeper, we find that the Bediyas, hailing from the Sundarban area, had in our study the highest share of non-agricultural work, followed by the Kisans (largely located in Malda). On the other hand, the Savars, coming mainly from Jangalmahal, had the lowest share of non-agricultural occupations, followed by the Mechs of North Bengal (see Table 4.7). The higher share of Bediyas in non-agricultural work was due to the conversion of agricultural lands into *Bheris* in the Sundarbans. Nearly half of the Bediya working population (47%) was found engaged in non-agricultural work there. The traditional occupation of cultivation that they were pursuing since their settlement in the Sundarbans after reclamation of the jungle in the colonial period was found to be pursued by a meagre 11 percent of the working population only. Importantly, they did not have a significant presence in pisciculture, which has now become the main economic foundation of the Sandeshkhali block in the Sundarbans. Only 11 percent of their working population was found to be engaged in pisciculture

82 Earlier, the Adivasis of these areas used to migrate to the adjacent regions of commercial agriculture for harvesting, but with the expansion of the urban-industrial corridor, the Bhil migrants were more likely to be found working at distant urban construction sites etc than in irrigated paddy fields. See Mosse et al (2016).

as their primary occupation (pisciculture has been presented under the head of self-employment in Table 4.7). However, the important point to note is that both Bediyas and Kisans, representing the plains of Bengal and having higher exposure to the labour market than many others, were engaged in non-agricultural work more than their fellow Adivasis. On the other hand, the Savars, having lower exposure to the labour market and still remaining relatively isolated from modern society, were the least engaged with non-agricultural work (11%). Against the backdrop of their alienation from forest and their minimal contact with the labour market, this 'hunting and gathering' Adivasi group was pursuing agricultural work mostly as wage labourers (41%). However, their traditional occupation of forestry was also the means of livelihood for a substantial proportion of their working population (31%). Importantly, the Lodhas, like the fellow Savars, were found to be dependent mostly on forestry (61%); however, due to the clubbing of Lodhas with the Kharias, this is not presented separately in Table 4.7.

Along with the Savars, Kisans too were at the top of the league of agricultural workers in our survey (41% each); on the other hand, hardly any agricultural labourer was found among the hill Adivasis in North Bengal - viz. among Tamangs, Limbus, Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpas, and Lepchas. This is partly because Lepchas having the highest share of cultivators (45%) in our survey among all Adivasi groups still depend to some extent on their traditional practice of mutual help e.g., *Parma* for cultivation, and because in our survey, Tamangs and Limbus were mainly from tea gardens and cinchona gardens.

Predicaments of the Tea-garden Workers

Oraons were ahead of all communities in terms of their share of plantation workers, followed by the Mundas (see Table 4.7). Two thirds of the Oraon working population in West Bengal was found to be engaged as plantation workers in tea gardens situated in the Dooars and Terai regions of Jalpaguri and Darjeeling district respectively, while the corresponding figure for the Mundas was 30 percent.⁸³ However, the groups that had immigrated from Chhotanagpur and Santal Parganas in the colonial period were found to constitute the majority of these plantation workers in West Bengal. Of course, the Tamangs and Limbus were also found to constitute a considerable proportion of plantation workers in tea gardens of West Bengal and 22 and 19 percent of their respective working populations were found in plantation work in tea gardens. Both Tamangs and Limbus were found in cinchona gardens also as casual labourers. Combining

83 Although Kharias had a higher share of plantation workers (33 per cent) than the Mundas, due to clubbing of them with the Lodhas, they ranked sixth from the top with 18 per cent of plantation workers. Lodhas were actually found in no places other than in West Medinipur district in our survey.

the workers of tea gardens and cinchona gardens, the proportion of plantation workers for the Tamangs and Limbus came to 25 and 22 percent respectively (see Table 4.7).⁸⁴ Adivasis like Savars, Kisans, Mechs and Sherpas were also found as plantation workers in tea gardens but their presence was negligible.⁸⁵ It is important to mention here that hardly any plantation worker in tea gardens was found to join the ranks in the last 50 years from any background other than that of a plantation worker. This suggests a cycle of reproduction of plantation workers from their own ranks, alluding to the unattractiveness of plantation work mired in inferior working conditions.⁸⁶

Indeed, the worsening condition of the tea gardens in West Bengal, particularly in the Dooars, headlined mainstream media on many occasions due to malnutrition and starvation deaths of Adivasi workers. Labels like ‘closed gardens’ or ‘sick gardens’ have become common terms for describing the tea gardens in West Bengal. A few days prior to our survey, the Dimdima Tea Garden run by the Duncan group had remained closed and when this garden was revisited a year after the survey, it was again found to be closed.⁸⁷ In the absence of plantation work, many Kharias in the Dimdima Tea Garden were found to engage themselves in collection of stones for local contractors from the river adjacent to the garden.⁸⁸ The Adivasi plantation workers of the Nagaisurea Tea Garden that reportedly witnessed incidents of starvation deaths two years earlier complained that they were not receiving their wages in time. Dulka Tudu of this tea garden said,

“Wages are being paid in installments. Say, for example, Rs. 100 is paid out of the total of Rs. 150. (*Kisti system chol raba hai. 150 bole 100 dichchbe.*)”

Another worker, Hilal Soren of the same garden asked,

“How can we keep track of our dues if wages payable this month are paid after three months? We are not educated persons. We cannot keep tabs on Decemeber, January and so on. (*Ek maser poyasa tin mas bade dile kivabe hisab rakhbbo? Amra to poralekha lok noy. December/January esob amra bujhi na.*)”

84 As an exception, we found a rubber garden in Ghasmari Basti, a village in Dooars and dominated by the Mech, where only a few Mech Adivasi workers were found engaged as plantation workers.

85 The Savars reportedly immigrated to tea gardens from Odisha and they were culturally different from the Savars of South Bengal.

86 As per Sharit K Bhowmik, at the beginning of plantation work, the planters encouraged family migration of the Adivasis to ensure this reproduction of the plantation worker from their own rank itself. See Bhowmik (2016).

87 Altogether 13 tea gardens were visited by our investigators in Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri districts.

88 These stones were procured by the local contractors.



Handrolling livelihood: Bhumij Woman making ropes from Sabui grass

Thus, the Adivasis engaged in tea gardens as plantation workers have been going through a severe crisis. Some of them have tried to deal with this situation of extreme hardship by migrating temporarily to other places in search of work;⁸⁹ but on the whole they have remained tied to the longstanding tradition of plantation work. Plantation workers comprised a little higher than 12 percent of the Adivasi working population in our survey but most of them were tea garden workers with a few exceptions of cinchona and rubber plantation workers.

Beyond Manual Work

Household industry as a source of livelihood plays a nominal role in the lives of Adivasi communities as per the Census of 2011; similarly, only two percent of the total working population in our survey was found engaged with this type of occupation. However, the Mahalis stood out in this respect in that they were found to hold on to their traditional occupation of 'basket making' in a substantially high proportion (33%) (see Table 4.7). As per the census data, the proportion of Mahali workers engaged in household industry was 25 percent in rural areas of West Bengal (see Table A.S.4.2 in Appendix II). It is important to mention here that the Mahalis, whether from Jangalmahal or from Birbhum, were found compelled to purchase bamboo from the market for the making of baskets.

⁸⁹ Reportedly, crisis ridden forced migration has resulted into trafficking of teen-age girls in some cases.

Importantly, only the North Bengal based Adivasis (except the Ravas) were found in regular-wage or salaried employment in a substantial proportion in our survey. Tamangs were ahead of the rest in this regard, followed by the Mechs: 25 and 22 percent of the Tamang and the Mech working population respectively were found in regular-wage or salaried work (see Table 4.7). Similarly, in case of self employment too, the North Bengal based Adivasis outnumbered their counterparts residing in other parts of the state. Bediyas from south Bengal were the only exception in this regard. All the North Bengal based Adivasis were found engaged in petty businesses like running grocery shops, or home-stay facilities, in procurement and sale of cardamom or betel nut, or as owners of rental cars or working as petty civil contractors and such. On the other hand, hardly any South Bengal based Adivasi was found in any sort of business other than selling local liquor (*Handia*). However, Bediyas were found engaged in pisciculture to a considerable extent (11 percent). Salaried work or self-employment remained off limits for the Lodha-Kharia group (see Table 4.7). Similarly, professions of doctors and lawyers seemed beyond the reach of the Adivasis who constituted our sample. A few were getting by as private tutors. In our survey, one individual from Jangalmahal was found to be practicing modern medicine without having the requisite qualification.

The above discussion clearly indicates that the Adivasis in this state are primarily a labouring community, surviving mainly on precarious livelihood opportunities.⁹⁰ The precariousness of their labour ensues mainly from the fact that it is casual wage labour— whether agricultural or non-agricultural, or plantation work.⁹¹ With relatively lower levels of education among them, occupations that are likely to facilitate upward mobility seem off limits for the majority of Adivasis in this state. However, the substantial change that we find in the occupational pattern of the Adivasis in West Bengal is the rise in non-agricultural labour due to temporary migration on their part for non-agricultural work both within and outside the state.

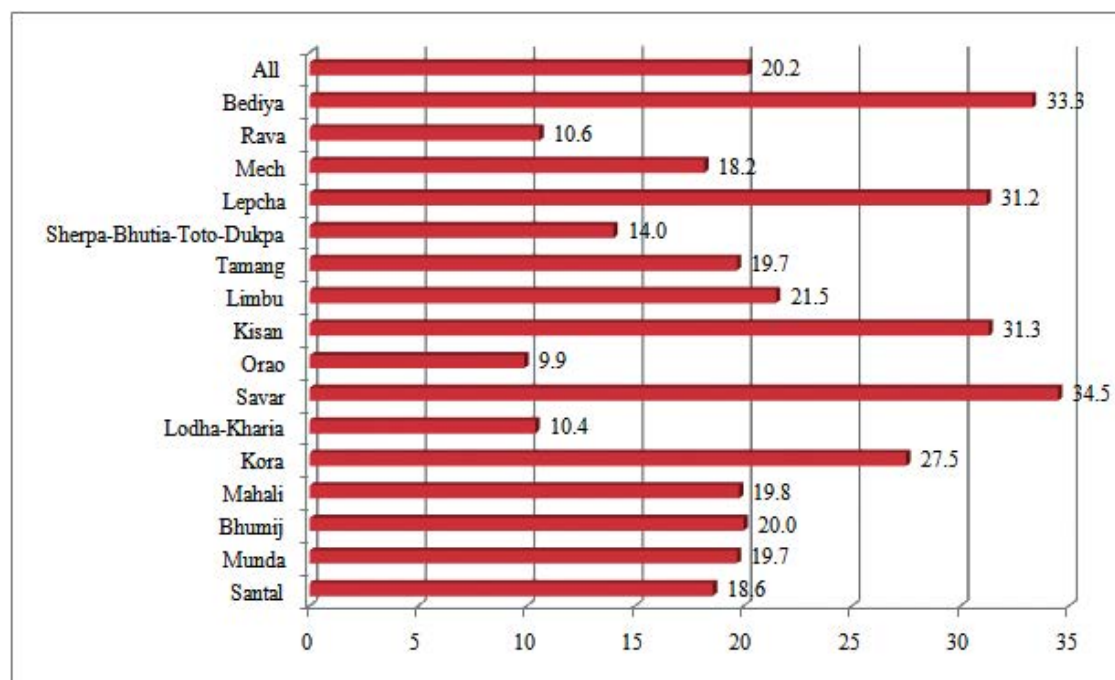
Shifting Pattern of Migration

Analysing the information on migration, we find that 20 percent of the Adivasi working population in West Bengal was migrating every year for a certain period

90 It is important to mention here that although Adivasi households from all communities had some kind of livestock for their livelihood maintenance, none of them reported it as their primary occupation.

91 The female workforce that is a very important constituent of the Adivasi working population had a higher share in occupations like agricultural labour, plantation labour, crafts, forestry, fishing and so on than their male counterparts; the converse is true in occupations like regular wage and salaried employment, self employment and non-agricultural labour (see Table A.4.12 in Appendix III). It has been discussed in detail in Chapter 6.

Figure 4.4. Share of migrant workers to the total working population in West Bengal for various Adivasi communities (in percent)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

of time to earn their livelihood in one spell or more.⁹² Savars were found out-migrating the most (35%) as compared to other Adivasi groups in West Bengal, followed by the Bediyas (33%), while the Oraons were migrating the least (10%) remaining very close to Lodha-Kharias and Ravas (see Figure 4.4). However, practices of migration among various Adivasi communities in the state do not show any revealing patterns that may shed light on whether dwindling access to forest resources or declining farm employment opportunities is the main driving force behind Adivasi migration. Disaggregating the data by tea gardens, cinchona gardens, forest villages and revenue villages, we find that migration was the highest for the revenue villages (23%) and it was the lowest for the tea gardens (10%), alluding to a need to carry out a regional analysis of migration patterns. Following male-female variations in migration, we find that males were migrating more than their female counterparts in the working population – 28 percent for males against 10 percent for females.

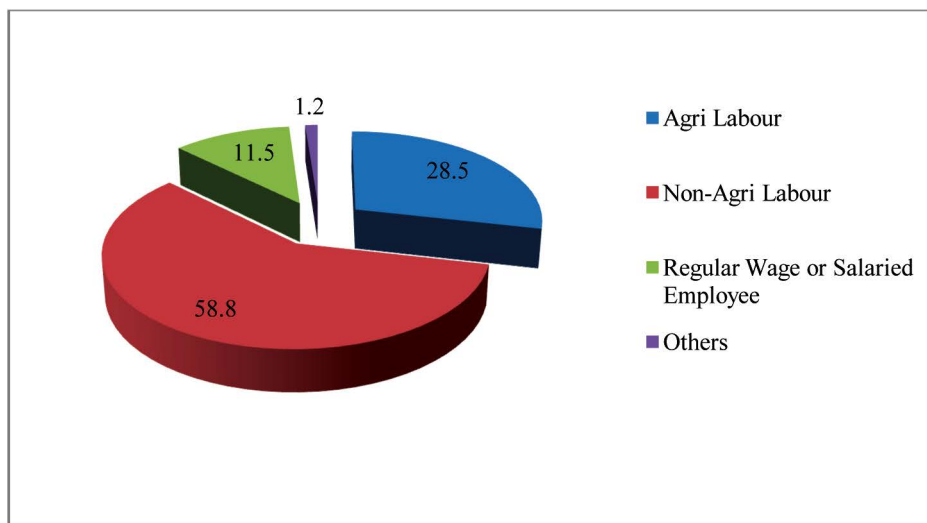
Analysing the occupation of the migrants at destination points, we find that nearly 59 percent of the migrant workers were engaged as non-agricultural labourers while the corresponding figure for agricultural labourers was nearly half of the non-agricultural labourers – 29 percent (see Figure 4.5). Bhuju

⁹² Migration due to marriage was not captured in our survey.

Murmu, resident of a village in Purulia recalls,

Who knows since when we had started going to the east (Bardhaman and Hugli) for agricultural wage work. Perhaps my grandfather, or his grandfather first went to Bardhaman. Those days, as we hear from the old men, they went walking. It continued for many years. I too had been going to Bardhaman from my childhood, first accompanying my parents, then as an independent worker. I tell you the truth, earlier we used to stay there for long. It was four times a year that we visited Bardhaman: For sowing the winter crop [in July-August], and harvesting the same [in December], and again for sowing the boro [in January], and harvesting it [in April-May]. But, now this has shrunk down to few days' activity. There is not much work available as machines are doing the most – harvesting, thrashing, etc. So, the young populations are moving to distant areas – Andhra, Bangalore, Madras, and who knows where. I have become old, cannot work hard. Yet, I go to Bardhaman at least once a year – it's an age-old habit. But, the next generation has changed its direction.

Figure 4.5. Distribution of Adivasi migrant workers in West Bengal by their occupation at destination points (in percent)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Thus, what Ben Rogaly (1999) found in the last century regarding the seasonal migrants of south West Bengal - that since the mid-1980s they worked as agricultural workers in more numbers in the rice fields of the Bengal plains due to the improvement in agricultural productivity in destination points - appears

to have changed considerably in more recent times.⁹³ The Adivasis of West Bengal seem to migrate for non-agricultural work more than for agricultural work. Importantly, 12 percent of migrant workers were found to be engaged as regular wage or salaried employees in our survey. However, most of them were from North Bengal based Adivasi groups.

There are, however, significant intra-community variations with respect to employment at the destination points. Disaggregating the occupations of the migrants at destination points by their community, we find that while Savars were migrating mostly for agricultural work (72%), neither the North Bengal based groups nor the Oraons or Kisans or Bediyas was found to migrate for agricultural work (see Table A.4.13 in Appendix III). Migration for non-agricultural occupations accounted for every single case found in our survey of out-migration among the Bediyas and the Kisans, followed by the Mundas having a share of 90 percent. Regular-wage or salaried employment at their destination points was the highest among the Tamangs (68%), followed by the Limbus (64%). However, the sample size was not substantial enough to draw any inference from it. The presence of South Bengal based Adivasis in this category of occupation was negligible (see Table A.4.13 in Appendix III).

As far as the male-female variation is concerned with respect to the various categories of occupations at the destination points, it is found that while females were engaged more as agricultural labourers at the destination points (53% against 21% for males), males were engaged more as non-agricultural labourers at the said locations (66% against 33% for females). Remarkably, the share of males and females in regular wage or salaried employment was almost equal for migrants (see Table 4.8).

Table 4.8. Distribution of Adivasi migrant workers in West Bengal by their occupations at destinations point and by gender (in percent)

Gender	Agri Labor	Non-Agri Labor	Independent Professional (Private tutor etc)	Regular Wage or Salaried Employee	Self-Employment other than cultivation & crafts	Others	Sample size
Male	21.4 (80)	66.2 (247)	0.3 (1)	11.3 (42)	0.8 (3)	0.0 (0)	373
Female	53.3 (57)	32.7 (35)	0.0 (0)	12.1 (13)	0.0 (0)	1.9 (2)	107
All	28.5 (137)	58.8 (282)	0.2 (1)	11.5(55)	0.6 (3)	0.4 (2)	480

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

⁹³ See Rogaly (1999) for seasonal migration in Bengal plains.

Probing the duration of migration during the last one year preceding the day of the survey, we find that the mean and median duration for the migrants working as agricultural labourers at the destination points were 60 and 43 days respectively. On the other hand, the corresponding figures for non-agricultural labourers were 181 and 180 days respectively, i.e., three or four times more than the duration for agricultural labourers (see Table 4.9). Hence, it is quite natural that the Adivasis would prefer to migrate more for non-agricultural work than for agricultural work, as non-agricultural work seems to provide more working days for them. Thus, non-agricultural work at destination points has increasingly become the primary occupation for the Adivasis in West Bengal.

Table 4.9. Duration of migration and history of migration for Adivasi migrant workers in West Bengal

Occupation at destination points	Mean period of migration (in days)	Median period of migration (in days)	Mean years of migration history	Median years of migration history	Sample size
Agricultural labor	59.5	42.5	11.0	10.0	137
Non-agricultural labor	180.8	180.0	6.8	4.0	282
Regular-Wage or Salaried Employment	291.6	330.0	4.6	3.0	55
Others	334.2	330.0	5.7	3.5	6

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

The above phenomenon appears to have received some momentum in recent times: while the mean and median years of migration history were 11 and 10 years respectively for workers migrating for agricultural work, the corresponding figures for workers migrating for non-agricultural work were seven and four years respectively (see Table 4.9). Due to push factors in source regions, the Adivasis have become desperate to find work and face all odds at the destination points for survival. A substantial proportion of them have been migrating to distant locations in search of non-agricultural work: while the place of destination for 35 percent of the migrants working as non-agricultural labourers was inside the state, the corresponding proportion for those working outside the state was 61 percent.⁹⁴ Importantly, the duration of migration for the regular wage or salaried employees was naturally incomparable to that for agricultural and non-agricultural work but, as mentioned earlier, the former was still confined to the Adivasis of North Bengal. They were even found to migrate abroad, to countries such as Thailand, Kuwait, and Oman for work.

⁹⁴ The Ravas, the Totos and the Dukpas were found to migrate to Bhutan for non-agricultural work.

However, temporary migration for non-agricultural work does not necessarily mean higher standards of living for the households. For a majority of them, this was survival-oriented migration as opposed to migration for a better standard of living.

Pattern of Work Participation

In the absence of adequate natural resources for livelihood management and in the absence of reasonable wages for casual labour, every adult member of a Adivasi household was usually found to seek one or more occupations (one being primary) for their survival.⁹⁵ Besides this, children and elderly people were also found to engage themselves in economic activities to meet the necessities of the households. Engagement of students in economic activities was not scarce.

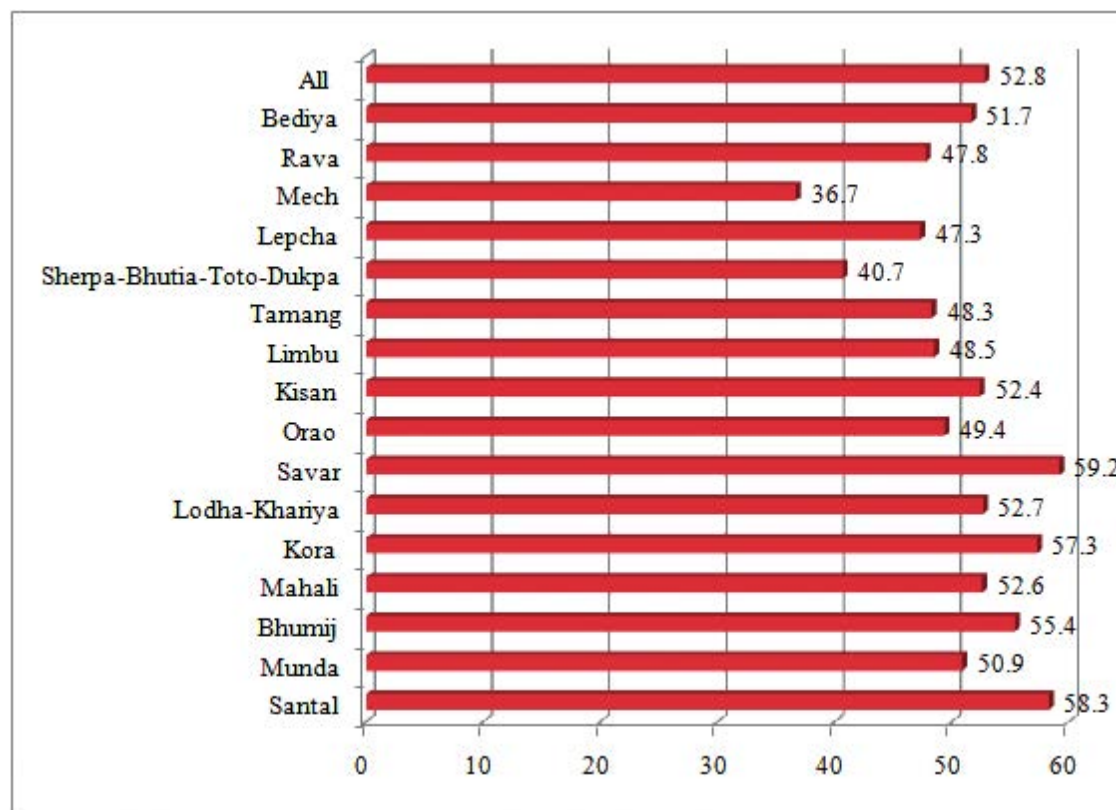
A child of 11 years, Rinki Savar of Khejuria village in Bankura district, was found working as a wage labourer. Gita Kharia of Mechpara Tea Gardens in Jalpaiguri district was found working in a tea garden, being enrolled simultaneously in standard 12.

Engagement in economic activities was substantially higher among those advanced in age: six percent of the working population in our survey was found to have crossed the age of 60 years. The Worker Population Ratio (WPR) in our survey was found to be substantially high (53%) due to this. Although, as per Census 2011, the WPR for the STs in rural areas was 48 percent in West Bengal, the corresponding figure for all social groups was only 38 percent in the same Census.⁹⁶ However, while the Savars were ahead of all the communities in this regard with 59 percent WPR, followed by the Santals (58%), with a 37 percent WPR, the Mechs were at the bottom. Notably, all the Adivasis based in North Bengal had a lower WPR as compared to the Adivasis based in South Bengal (see Figure 4.6). Thus, overall, the North Bengal based Adivasis appear to be in a better socio-economic position than their counterparts in South Bengal.

95 Low wages for the casual labour is a chronic problem for the Adivasis in India. While the minimum wage announced by the Government of West Bengal was Rs 234 (without food) for unskilled agricultural work for the period of 1 January 2018 to 30 June 2018 [see GoWB (2017)], our survey found the average wage rates to be Rs 173 for men and Rs 147 for women. The situation was no different for non-agricultural work. For example, the minimum wage received by the tea garden worker for plucking tea leaves was found to be Rs 150 for compulsory plucking of 26 kg of leaf at the time of our survey.

96 The WPR for STs and all social groups in rural areas of India were 50 and 42 percent respectively in Census 2011.

Figure 4.6. Community-wise WPR among Adivasis of West Bengal (in percent)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Significantly, despite their efforts to engage themselves in any occupations that are available, four percent of the Adivasi population were found unemployed (with an employment rate of seven percent) in our survey.^{97, 98} But, the hill Adivasis of North Bengal or the Adivasis having substantial presence in various tea gardens, were found to have a comparatively higher proportion of unemployed persons than among the others (see Table A.4.14 in Appendix III).

Although we could not incorporate the numerically smaller groups into the survey, our observations and interactions with some of the members of those groups revealed particular vulnerabilities of these sections. For example, the Baiga, Chik Baraik, Chero, Ho, Mal Pahariya, and Sauriya Pahariya — groups that have in-migrated from Jharkhand and Chattisgarh—seemed to have witnessed a

⁹⁷ Unemployment rate is defined as a ratio of unemployed population to the total labor force available for work that includes both employed and unemployed populations.

⁹⁸ As per NSS, the corresponding figure was two percent for the Adivasis in rural areas of West Bengal in 2011-12 while the corresponding figure for all social groups was one percent in rural areas of West Bengal at the same time. See GoI, MoSPI (2015).

major change in their occupational pattern. While elsewhere the groups tended to depend more on cultivation—both settled and shift—the loss of their natural setting on the one hand and numerical weakness on the other left them socially and economically alienated from their cultural history. As one of the few Mal Pahariyas we could interact with told us:

Don't know why our fore parents came here. We only hear stories that our ancestors, don't know how many years ago, lived in the hills and forests. They were free. They cleared the forest and cultivated. But, there was a rule: the land you have cultivated has to be left at least for three years to allow the forest to regain its vitality. There was Mal Pahariya Raja. There were Dehris – the priests. They worshipped the forest. And, you know, they offered tobacco as the *prasad*... But, look at us here. We have nothing. Who will speak for us? We are very few – in this village I am alone. And there are some others in different areas. We are so few that it is difficult for us to get our children married.

The Mal Pahariya's tale was echoed by many other of the small groups.

Thus, the entire discussion presented above with regard to the occupations of the Adivasis reveals that though a considerable section of agriculturist Adivasis were still trying to survive on cultivation, most of the Adivasis in our study



Mahua flowers: Fast becoming a memory

were depending on casual wage labour for survival. The Adivasis residing in the enclave of teagardens were suffering even from want of wage labour, resulting in a severe crisis in their livelihood opportunities.

4.5 Concluding Remarks

The livelihood history of the Adivasis in India encompasses the transformation of a self-reliant economy into a market-based wage economy. In this process of transformation, while productive assets like land have been transformed into a commodity leading to the alienation of land, the symbiotic relationship between the human being and nature has also faced distortion, which has led to the alienation from forestland. The shrinkage of traditional livelihood opportunities resulting from the alienation of natural resources and other problems has finally left no alternative for the Adivasis but to become wage labourers. The analysis presented in this chapter shows that West Bengal is no exception in this regard. Legal protection made for the livelihood opportunities of the Adivasis does not seem to provide much support to them to lead a life secured of even the basics like food, let alone decent standards. This explains why despite the legislative measures for the protection of Adivasi land, the incidents of fresh alienation of land were found in the Sundarbans. Similarly, the enactment of FRA was found to be abysmally poor, and did not seem to provide any support to ensure the forest rights of the majority of the Adivasi population in West Bengal. Rather, fresh efforts were taking place to deprive the forest dwellers from their right to the forest: the recent Supreme Court Order for evacuating the forest dwellers (having no forest titles) from the forestland has added a new dimension to it.⁹⁹ Marginal holdings devoid of irrigation facilities and limited access to the forest with dwindling health, have been pushing the Adivasis towards wage labour as seasonal or temporary migrants. Life as a migrant worker itself is misery. Long hours of hard menial work, harsh working conditions, lack of medical and other facilities, social isolation and humiliation make their lives intolerable.¹⁰⁰ Even wage labour has been appearing to be scarce for the Adivasis residing in tea gardens, who were originally brought over there in the colonial period to provide labour on wage. Without land, without forests, and with problem-ridden wage labour, the Adivasis are still living in sub-human conditions. Of course, there is a small section of the Adivasi population who can sustain on cultivation, as is the case in South Bengal, or are absorbed in regular-wage or salaried employment

99 See Kannabiran (2019), DTE (2019), Rana (2019) and AnandabazarPatrika (2019).

100 Mazumdar (2016), Mosse et al (2016)

as found in North Bengal; but in general they are caught in a spiral of poverty due to weak economic foundations. Thus, the Adivasis have been struggling to ascertain a decent standard of living. Alas, the invisibility of state action towards creating an equitable environment for the Adivasis to enhance their capabilities to lead a decent and dignified life is contrasted sharply with the denial of basic rights and snatching away of the setting blessed by nature that helped them survive for centuries. The historical wrong, the injustice thrust upon the Adivasi peoples, is at times expressed in their helplessness: “There is nobody of our own; perhaps our fore parents had committed such a sin that we have been bearing the curse of God for generations”; and sometimes in the expression of revolt. The sin, however, was not committed by the fore parents of the Adivasis but by the seemingly civilized world, which deprived them of their land, forest, and natural gifts. Turning the wrong into right requires beginning with the acknowledgement of the double sin: first of forcing the Adivasis to live a life that often does not allow them to “appear in public without shame”; and second, making them believe this condition to be their destiny. The nation has to recognise that the deceit inflicted on the Adivasis is nothing but the self-deception practised by the entire nation, which ceases to make any advancement by keeping sections of its population in a condition of wretchedness. “Give us back our forest and lands, give us equal opportunity of education, give us employment, and see, whether the Adivasi can prosper or not,” declared a Munda of Belpahari. His words must find an echo so as to be heard by the state and dominant society.



Melting pot: Tea garden workers from various community

5. Social Security: Policy and Practice

Adivasis find themselves destined to live in a harsh world full of lacks and uncertainties vis-à-vis food, employment and housing conditions. That some of our co-citizens are forced to live their lives with huge deficits of dignity calls for the moral intervention of the state and society to take positive action in order to ensure a decent life for the Adivasis. The moral demands constitute, among other things, initiatives to institute a number of social security programmes, pertaining to food security, employment guarantee and housing. Our survey attempted to assess the potential and actual delivery of some of the social security programmes. The programmes showed tremendous potential to add to the development of the lives of the Adivasis. In fact, the intervention on food security in West Bengal has produced reasonably good results – although there is much room for further improvement. However, lack of clarity in policy prioritisation and faulty implementation at the grass root levels, often emanating from a kind of ‘respect deficit,’ have reduced the social security programmes to mere formalities or at best money-making ventures for parties with vested interests. Partial success of some programmes in West Bengal - food security, for example - while demonstrating the possibility of social security initiatives for the Adivasis, demands radical correction in policy and practice that is respectful of the riches of Adivasi cultural lives.

5.1 Introduction

They lived several hundred miles apart. Ludi Savar lived in a village in Purulia. Rujel Rava’s home was in a village in Jalpaiguri. They differed from each other in many ways: geo-social location, ethnicity, skin colour, cultural heritage, mother tongue, and so on. Yet, a single commonality tied them closely in a way that practically made them social twins: both should have been under geriatric care but had been reduced to providing for and sustaining themselves. They were not kinless but their children were so poor and helpless that they could hardly provide them with the comfort of living without having to work. “What can they do,” asked Ludi.



Creating own comfort zone: A Santal woman renovating the house

There is not much [wage] work. The forest is also gradually getting barren. You work the whole day, and yet, do not get in return sufficient money to buy food. Food provided through public distribution system sustains us only for few days... So, I work. My granddaughter and daughter-in-law bring the leaves from the forest – I can't walk. I stitch them, sitting here... Sitting for long is difficult. What to do?

Rujel's life was even harder. Severe income poverty forced her son to migrate to distant provinces of the country. And yet, income from remittance could barely meet the household requirements and the remaining members tried to fill the gap through additional income. Opportunities of income in the locality were offered by the nearby forest, which all household members above the age of six explored to collect firewood and other produces. Amidst the contradiction between physical infirmity that slowed down Rujel's mobility and flaming survival related material needs, she had struck a bargain of going to the forest on alternative days.

Ludi and Rujel are not isolated instances of battling with poverty and deprivation. Rather, such poor and deprived old people formed a part of the lives of many of the Adivasi households we had interacted with during our fieldwork. That Ludi and Rujel had to work to support their biological survival despite physical infirmity owing to perceived old age was a social shame in itself (this was compounded by the socially divided perception of old age: their age could not be ascertained with precision, and it was quite possible that many of their privileged co-citizens would look much younger than them). Nevertheless, the understanding that 'one has to work until death' had a pitiful meaning for the households. "People think that I do not care for my mother-in-law," said Radha, Ludi's daughter-in-law.

"But tell me, how much can I do? We exist hand to mouth, often go to the forest on an empty stomach. Who knows better than I that she had worked very hard all through her life to raise the children, and now she deserves care. But, tell me, what can I do? I am doubly hurt: First, I am ashamed of my not being able to give her the deserved care; and second, being the daughter-in-law I am always at the receiving end as people complain against and even abuse the daughter-in-law who, they think, does not take care of the mother-in-law. I blame my fate."

Poverty, under-employment, hunger, under-nutrition on the one hand and a severe lack of social opportunities on the other have been overwhelmingly internalized by the Adivasis. Look at the instance of poverty: despite substantial reduction in poverty ratios over time, the Adivasi poverty ratios in

many states in India remained extremely high in 2011-12.¹ The prevalence of multi-dimensional poverty was highest for the Adivasis in India – 74 percent against 33 percent for the general category of people in 2005-06.² Turning to employment opportunities, one finds a picture that supplements the situation vis-à-vis poverty: the proportion of marginal workers, i.e., workers not getting 180 days of work in a year, was 35 percent of the total workers for the Adivasis in India, according to the 2011 Census, while the corresponding figure for all social groups was much lower (25%). The West Bengal figure was strikingly high – the proportion of marginal workers to total workers among the Adivasis was 42 percent against the corresponding figure of 26 percent for all social groups. In other words, the problem of underemployment was severe for Adivasis in West Bengal. Poverty, unemployment or under-employment inter alia other causes resulted in very high incidences of hunger and under-nutrition among the Adivasis – the highest among all social groups. While 10 percent of all Adivasi households in rural areas of West Bengal were reportedly found suffering from inadequacy of food in 2009-10, the corresponding figure for all social groups was relatively much smaller (four percent).³ Similarly, while according to the National Family Health Survey 4 (2015-16) the proportion of underweight children (under five years) for the Adivasis of West Bengal was 42 percent, the corresponding figure for all social groups was 32 percent.⁴ Reports of severe hunger and under-nutrition leading to ‘starvation deaths’ among the Adivasis in different parts of the country have become rather common.⁵ The context added tremendous urgency to the demand of publicly supported social security measures for the Adivasis to acquire the means of basic capabilities across the country including West Bengal.

However, in the scholarly world, there are contentious debates about the forms

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- 1 While Maharashtra and Odisha exhibited rural ST poverty rates exceeding 60 percent, states like Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and West Bengal suffered from rates exceeding 50 percent. The corresponding figure for the whole country was 45 percent against 25 percent for all social groups. As far as West Bengal is considered, the corresponding proportion for all social groups was 23 percent in rural areas. See Panagariya and More (2013).
 - 2 The multidimensional poverty index and multidimensional head count ratio, as developed by Sabina Alkire and Suman Seth, include ten indicators grouped under three dimensions of education, health and standard of living. These are used to ascertain the incidence, depth and intensity of poverty. See Alkire and Seth (2013).
 - 3 As far as the whole country is concerned, the corresponding figures were two per cent for the STs and one per cent for all social groups. See GoI, MoSPI (2013).
 - 4 At the country level the proportions of underweight children (under five years) were 45 and 36 per cent for the Adivasis and all social groups respectively. See IIPS and GoI, MoHFW (2017²) for West Bengal figures and IIPS and GoI, MoHFW (2017¹) for country level figures.
 - 5 Anandabazar Patrika (2018), Khera (2008¹), and Kumar (2001)

of social security measures to be taken in order to make them most effective and equitable. For example, income redistribution and income support in the form of (conditional or unconditional) cash or kind transfer are some of the modes of protection that typically take place in different country settings. In India, the Public Distribution System (PDS), nutritional support schemes at Anganwadi centres, school meal programmes, and housing schemes constitute some of the specific schemes that feature within the remit of social security programmes. Another important variant of social support inspired by the notion of economic rights is a kind of a publicly provided employment guarantee. The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) is one such Act that recognizes people's livelihood security as a social priority. The philosophical underpinnings of such social assurance claims and provisions entail broader notions of human security understood in terms of the rights to food, work and decent housing which are realisable through publicly organised arrangements. However, despite varying degrees of successes in the reach of the schemes, our study found serious lacunae in their implementation. The following part of this chapter is devoted to examining the social security provisions in their particular contexts.

5.2 'Stomach Aflame': Insecurity of Food and the Public Distribution System

Inadequacy of food has been a chronic problem among the Adivasis in India. Their traditional livelihood system has been reliant on agriculture and forestry but owing to the unfriendly agro-ecological settings, agricultural practices of the Adivasis have traditionally been low yielding. Low productivity in turn puts a major constraint on the Adivasis to ensure adequate food throughout the year. The constraint has partly been compensated through forest resources, which found paramount importance among the Adivasis in assuaging hunger.⁶ However, the shrinkage of primary resources for sustenance (due to alienation from land and forest) considerably affected the availability of food.⁷ Even those retaining land for agriculture have either been deprived of the facility of irrigation or have been left with marginal holdings producing crops far too inadequate to ensure food security.⁸ The chapter on Livelihood has discussed

6 Elwin (1963)

7 GoI (2004)

8 While absence of irrigation facilities for the Adivasis was the highest in the state of Jharkhand followed by Maharashtra (excluding North-Eastern states), the share of marginal operational holding for the Adivasis was highest for the state of Kerala followed by Bihar. Only 12 percent Adivasi operational holding in Jharkhand was found to enjoy the facility of irrigation in 2011-12 while the corresponding figure for the state of Maharashtra was 15 percent. As far as the whole country is concerned, the corresponding figure was 31 per cent in 2011-12. In case of marginal operational

how marginal operational holdings accompanied with poor irrigation facilities left little scope for the Adivasis in West Bengal to procure food adequately from agricultural production. As per our survey, only 19 percent Adivasi agricultural households in West Bengal could depend upon agricultural production to meet the requirement of staple food (rice) for the entire year. The choice of crops for cultivation to meet the dietary needs of the Adivasis has also been a matter of concern.⁹ As far as forestry is concerned, in addition to the crisis related to using it as a source of supplementary food, the low exchange value for the Minor Forest Produce (MFP) has also had unfavourable effects on the food security of Adivasis. Drawing from our village survey data, we have found disproportionately low returns from a major MFP collected by the Adivasis of West Bengal, the Sal (*Shorea robusta*) leaf: collection and stitching of 7000 leaves needed, in Jangalmahal comprising parts of Paschim Medinipur, Bankura, and Purulia districts, seven hours on an average, but the proceedings of the produces could hardly make on an average a sum of Rs 86. Similarly, in the absence of a decent educational achievement for better economic opportunities, the Adivasis were found mostly engaged in casual labour with low wages, leaving households with extremely low purchasing powers to procure adequate amounts of food. Thus, we see that despite the country making considerable advancement in food production, the Adivasis have been struggling for adequate supply of quality food.¹⁰

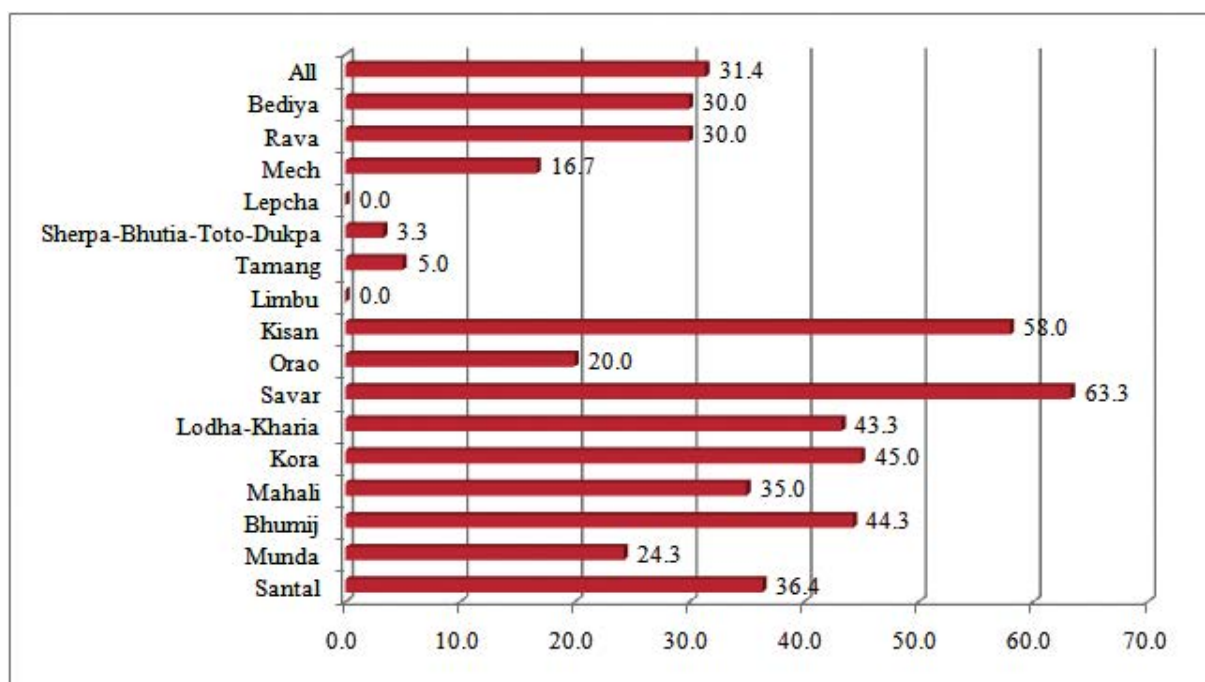
‘Filling the Stomach’: Food in Quantitative Terms

“We don’t even get enough to fill the stomach,” said a respondent of Birbhum. Indeed, the National Sample Surveys conducted in the last decade, despite showing considerable progress in removing hunger in general, found the degree of inadequacy among the Adivasi households to be quite high. As per the NSS, while the proportion of ST households reportedly suffering from inadequacy of food was 18 percent in rural areas of West Bengal in 2004-05, the corresponding

holding, the proportion of Adivasi marginal operational holding was 91 percent for Kerala in 2010-11 while the corresponding figure for Bihar was 88 percent. The proportion of Adivasi marginal operational holding was 55 percent for the whole country. See GoI, MoAFW (2015) for irrigation facilities and GoI, MoA (No Date) for operational holding.

- 9 Citing the change in cropping pattern for some areas of Chhotanagpur (rice gaining at the expenses of more drought-resistant crops), Indrani Mazumdar opined that the shift in crop had actually made local agriculture less resilient against failure of the rains and more susceptible to famines. See Mazumdar (2016).
- 10 According to V B Athreya et al, although there was sustained increase in per capita net availability of foodgrain in India in the period 1981-2000, there was indication of an emerging crisis for availability of foodgrain in the period of 2001-05. For detail see Athreya et al (2008).

Figure 5.1. Distribution of surveyed Adivasi households with inadequacy of food in last one year preceding the survey by community (in percent)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

figure for 2009-10 was 10 percent. No other state had a higher incidence of reported hunger (in terms of inadequacy of food) for the STs than West Bengal in 2004-05 and 2009-10.¹¹ However, our survey has found the proportion of Adivasi households not getting two square meals a day for some period in the year preceding the survey to be much higher – 31 percent, the worst sufferers among them being the Savars (63%) followed by the Lodhas (60%) –believed to be the traditional hunting and gathering Adivasi groups in West Bengal.¹² The

11 The proportion of household suffering from inadequacy of food was 12 and four per cent for all social groups in rural areas of West Bengal in 2004-05 and 2009-10 respectively. See GoI, MoSPI (2007) and GoI, MoSPI (2013).

12 As Lodhas are clubbed with the Kharias in the Census, following the Census method, it appears that Kisans followed the Savars regarding crisis of inadequacy of food (see Figure 5.1). Our qualitative observation suggests that there was over reporting by the Kisan households regarding inadequacy of food. Actually, most of the Kisans in Malda district had the same surname, 'Mondal' that the *Chain* community (belonging to Scheduled Caste group) had there. Hence it has become a problem there to identify the *Kisan* 'Mondals' from the *Chain* 'Mondals' resulting refusal by the district administration of the Government to issue ST certificate for the Kisans. Hence to legitimise their demand for ST certificate, some Kisan respondents made over reporting regarding starvation to substantiate their lower socio-economic status as other STs.

hill Adivasis of North Bengal, viz. the Lepcha, Limbu, Sherpa-Bhutia group, and Tamangs were not found to face the wrath of hunger to the extent that the Savars and Lodhas reportedly faced (see Figure 5.1). Our observations found corroboration of a historically continued distinction between the Adivasis of the Himalayan hills and their southern counterparts in terms of food security from a study conducted five decades ago.¹³

Further probing found that 14 percent of the households suffered inadequacy of food for a period of 30 to 60 days. However, the extent of food inadequacy was much higher among the Savars: while 17 percent of them suffered from annual food shortages for 30-60 days, 27 percent had to face it for more than 90 days a year (see Table A.5.1 in Appendix III).¹⁴

Our survey, however, found some improvement in terms of food adequacy in the past 50 years. Tapan Kumar Sanyal found in 1979 that most of the Adivasi people in West Bengal could afford meals only twice a day.¹⁵ In contrast, our survey found that 88 percent of the surveyed households reportedly took food thrice a day. Nevertheless, in most cases the food taken was often not a stomach filling meal. A standard breakfast menu of the Adivasis, in most part of the state, contained a handful of rice soaked in water poured in after the rice was cooked. The noon meal, however, was relatively “sumptuous” with a reasonable quantity of rice, mostly soaked in water. Again, the dinner contained little rice. No side dish came with breakfast, but some vegetables or pulses accompanied the lunch and dinner. Occasionally they found fish or meat to make the meal delicious. In some areas, people sometime ate puffed rice in the morning. “Where shall we get food to fill our stomachs with? We must impose a control on eating – *kontrul kore khetu habe*. If we were to eat full stomach, we would have to go hungry half of the year,” said Ratu Munda of Belpahari. Also, there appeared some major inter-community variations: the majority of the Ravas (53%) followed by the Lodha-Kharias (38%) were found to take meals only twice a day (see Table 5.1). Again, for 11 percent of the households, adequacy meant only two meals a day (see Table A.5.2 in Appendix III).

The Content of Food

It must be mentioned here that the perceived adequacy of food was often found to be in variance with the norms of actual adequacy. In most cases the Adivasi perception of adequacy was largely based on the cereal-centric food habit, which has deceptively emerged as a cultural aspect but in essence is a product

13 See Sanyal (1979) for the said study.

14 It must be referred here that we did not find any significant difference in crisis of inadequacy of food for the households residing in the tea gardens and the households residing in the villages. As most of the tea gardens surveyed by us were fully functional at the time of our survey and the social security programmes like PDS and MGNREGA were doing relatively well in the tea gardens, the starvation situation once reported for the tea gardens in Dooars was not found to be happening in our survey.

15 Sanyal (1979)

Table 5.1 Distribution of Adivasi households by frequency of meals taken in a day and by community (in percent)

Community	Frequency of meal			Sample size
	Once in a day	Twice in a day	Thrice in a day or more	
Santal	0.0 (0)	5.7 (16)	94.3 (264)	280
Munda	0.0 (0)	2.9 (2)	97.1 (68)	70
Bhumij	0.0 (0)	12.9 (9)	87.1 (61)	70
Mahali	0.0 (0)	5.0 (2)	95.0 (38)	40
Kora	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	98.3 (59)	60
Lodha-Kharia	3.3 (1)	38.3 (23)	60.0 (36)	60
Savar	0.0 (0)	16.7 (5)	83.3 (25)	30
Oraon	1.2 (1)	2.5 (2)	96.2 (77)	80
Kisan	0.0 (0)	10.0 (5)	90.0 (45)	50
Limbu	0.0 (0)	36.7 (11)	63.3 (19)	30
Tamang	0.0 (0)	8.3 (5)	91.7 (55)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	0.0 (0)	20.0 (6)	80.0 (24)	30
Lepcha	0.0 (0)	26.7 (8)	73.3 (22)	30
Mech	0.0 (0)	20.0 (6)	80.0 (24)	30
Rava	0.0 (0)	53.3 (16)	46.7 (14)	30
Bediya	0.0 (0)	10.0 (5)	90.0 (45)	50
All	0.2 (2)	12.2 (122)	87.6 (876)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey 2018

of the political economy of deprivation and hunger. The artificially constructed culture seemed to have a clear reflection in the reporting of food adequacy. To illustrate, a substantial section of the households (24%) said that they did not face food shortages in the year preceding the survey. However, detailed investigation found that the only item they included in their food-adequacy report was rice. They did not have pulses even once a week, but did not find it worthwhile to report it as part of food shortage. Similarly, availability of fruits in their diet was reported to be meagre. They acquired fruits solely through collection; there were no instances of them being able to purchase any. Contrarily, it was relatively easy for them to procure vegetables from backyards, forests or other places on a fairly regular basis.¹⁶

It is worth mentioning here that 59 percent of the surveyed households never consumed milk or curd (see Table 5.2). Hardly any Adivasi in West Bengal had the tradition of consuming milk or curd, and it features in their meals only as an influence of the non-Adivasi societies.¹⁷ We did not find much difference in the present food habits of the Adivasis compared with what prevailed five decades

¹⁶ 83 percent Adivasi households were consuming vegetables daily.

¹⁷ Sanyal (1979)

ago. Like now, vegetables followed by pulses eaten with rice were the main food of the Adivasis five decades ago. The only change seems to be the increase in proportion of households consuming specific foods in certain frequencies. The only deviation from the pattern was seen in the consumption of fruits, the natural availability of which has now reduced because of the shrinkage in forest coverage.¹⁸ Overall, it may be safely concluded that the Adivasis in West Bengal are still suffering from chronic deficiency of protein, fat, mineral and vitamin rich food due to rare and limited access to quality food.

Further analysis found that while the deficiency of a balanced diet was highest among the Savars and Kisans, it was the least with regard to the Tamangs and Limbus (see Table 5.2). Savars could procure pulses least while Kisans were the most deficient in eggs and fish. None of the Savar households could consume milk or curd even once a week.¹⁹ Tamangs and Limbus, on the contrary, were ahead of all communities in terms of consumption of most of the specific foods. Aside from the socio-economic advantage-differences, the ecological differences seemed to have had an impact on the status of food consumption. For example, while 48 percent Adivasi households were consuming fish at least once a week on an average, the corresponding proportion for Bediyas was 90 percent – the highest among all. Easy availability of fish in the Sundarbans, the abode of all surveyed Bediya households, had given them the advantage. This exemplifies the importance of ecological factors in forming food habits of people that ensure the availability of food stuff. Conversely, the adverse ecological condition has resulted in the decline in consumption of fruits by the Adivasis in West Bengal.

We noted that particular groups such as the Savars in West Bengal have been suffering most from inadequacy of food both in terms of quantity and quality. Alleged starvation deaths among the Savars cannot be unrelated to this general line of opportunity-deprivation.

In short, a substantial proportion of Adivasis in West Bengal were still not in a position to procure adequate food, of ensured quantity and quality, throughout the year. This was found to continue even at a time when the implementation of The National Food Security Act, 2013 was on in full swing in West Bengal. The absence of livelihood security has made the Adivasis highly dependent on various food security schemes, namely, the Public Distribution System (PDS), Integrated Child Development Services (ICDS), and Mid-day Meal Scheme (MDMS) to meet their food requirements.

18 Ibid, for details of the food consumption pattern of the Adivasis in West Bengal five decades back.

19 None of the Lodha households consumed milk or curd even once in a week.

Table 5.2. Distribution of Adivasi households by consumption of specific foods (other than cereals) at least once in a week or never and by community (in percent)

Community	Consuming at least once in a week								Consuming never						Sample size
	Pulses	Vegetables	Egg	Fish	Meat	Milk or Curd	Fruits	Pulses	Vege- tables	Egg	Fish	Meat	Milk or Curd	Fruits	
Santal	64.6 (181)	96.8 (271)	31.1 (87)	39.3 (110)	32.9 (92)	4.3 (12)	3.2 (9)	2.9 (8)	0.0 (0)	6.4 (18)	1.1 (3)	1.4 (4)	78.9 (221)	15.0 (42)	280
Munda	72.9 (51)	97.1 (68)	42.9 (30)	51.4 (36)	24.3 (17)	7.1 (5)	4.3 (3)	4.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	7.1 (5)	0.0 (0)	2.9 (2)	61.4 (43)	22.9 (16)	70
Bhumij	62.9 (44)	95.7 (67)	37.1 (26)	45.7 (32)	30.0 (21)	10.0 (7)	2.9 (2)	1.4 (1)	0.0 (0)	5.7 (4)	0.0 (0)	5.7 (4)	70.0 (49)	24.3 (17)	70
Mahali	85.0 (34)	97.5 (39)	55.0 (22)	57.5 (23)	42.5 (17)	15.0 (6)	12.5 (5)	2.5 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50.0 (20)	25.0 (10)	40
Kora	53.3 (32)	100.0 (60)	23.3 (14)	33.3 (20)	30.0 (18)	13.3 (8)	5.0 (3)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	65 (39)	23.3 (14)	60
Lodha-Kharfa	75.0 (45)	96.7 (58)	23.3 (14)	36.7 (22)	31.7 (19)	10.0 (6)	3.3 (2)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	16.7 (10)	3.3 (2)	5.0 (3)	70.0 (42)	40.0 (24)	60
Savar	43.3 (13)	90.0 (27)	30.0 (9)	46.7 (14)	36.7 (11)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	16.7 (5)	0.0 (0)	13.3 (4)	10.0 (3)	10.0 (3)	86.7 (26)	10.0 (3)	30
Orao	88.8 (71)	97.5 (78)	60.0 (48)	66.2 (53)	43.8 (35)	13.8 (11)	8.8 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.8 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	48.8 (39)	22.5 (18)	80
Kisan	82.0 (41)	98.0 (49)	8.0 (4)	16.0 (8)	10.0 (5)	2.0 (1)	16.0 (8)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14.0 (7)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (5)	64.0 (32)	10.0 (5)	50
Limbu	90.0 (27)	100.0 (30)	66.7 (20)	66.7 (20)	76.7 (23)	30.0 (9)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (2)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	16.7 (5)	13.3 (4)	30
Tamang	91.7 (55)	96.7 (58)	66.7 (40)	53.3 (32)	76.7 (46)	23.3 (14)	5.0 (3)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	5.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	28.3 (17)	30.0 (18)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	83.3 (25)	93.3 (28)	63.3 (19)	60.0 (18)	70.0 (21)	20.0 (6)	16.7 (5)	6.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (2)	10.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	30.0 (9)	23.3 (7)	30
Lepcha	83.3 (25)	100.0 (30)	36.7 (11)	26.7 (8)	60.0 (18)	26.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	13.3 (4)	10.0 (3)	30
Mech	90.0 (27)	96.7 (29)	53.3 (16)	63.3 (19)	50.0 (15)	23.3 (7)	6.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (2)	6.7 (2)	3.3 (1)	36.7 (11)	23.3 (7)	30
Rava	83.3 (25)	100.0 (30)	40.0 (12)	60.0 (18)	63.3 (19)	20.0 (6)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	33.3 (10)	46.7 (14)	30
Bediya	74.0 (37)	98.0 (49)	36.0 (18)	90.0 (45)	8.0 (4)	8.0 (4)	2.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	6.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	6.0 (3)	52.0 (26)	14.0 (7)	50
All	73.3 (733)	97.1 (971)	39.0 (390)	47.8 (478)	38.1 (381)	11.0 (110)	5.2 (52)	2.3 (23)	0.0 (0)	7.0 (70)	1.8 (18)	2.7 (27)	59.3 (593)	20.9 (209)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

The Reach and Delivery of the PDS

The PDS was introduced in India to maintain price stability and making food grains available at reasonable prices to the marginalized people. It was extended to rural areas in the 1980s and was found to be an important safeguard against hunger for people in rural areas irrespective of social identity.²⁰ Reetika Khera found that the incidence of hunger was lower in states of India that had better functioning of PDS and vice versa.²¹ PDS has been made the backbone of the National Food Security Act, 2013 (henceforth NFSA) to provide food security to people suffering from inadequacy of food. However, the scheme was found to suffer from many shortcomings, including exclusion error, irregular opening of Fair Price Shops (FPS), and leakages.²² We also found some problems related to coverage and leakages, yet, the contribution of the PDS in extending food security to our surveyed households was better.

The PDS, as our survey found, met 34 percent of the total requirement of household food consumption, well below the share of open market purchase (43%) in the month preceding the survey (see Figure 5.2a).²³ Yet, the PDS as a consumer subsidy programme has become very important for the Adivasis in West Bengal. As Jiten Sardar of Nekra-anchra village of present Jhargram district said,

We are surviving as the rationing system [PDS] exists. If the rationing system ceases to continue, starvation will start. With the government's extension of such support people are managing to survive. (*Ration-ta achhe bole benche achhi. Ration bondho hole, onabar shuru hoye jabe. Sarkar ei sahajyota korchhe bole manusher dinta chole jachhhe*).

Jiten's words were substantiated by hard data: Over 90 percent of the surveyed households had procured PDS rice from the Fair Price Shop (FPS) in the month preceding the survey (see Table A.5.4 in Appendix III).²⁴ Households that did not procure the food were either deprived of the entitlement (owing to the ration dealer's mischief) or did not require it as they produced enough for sustenance throughout the year or were in a position to purchase better

20 See Athreya et al (2008) and Swaminathan (2008) for the evolution of PDS.

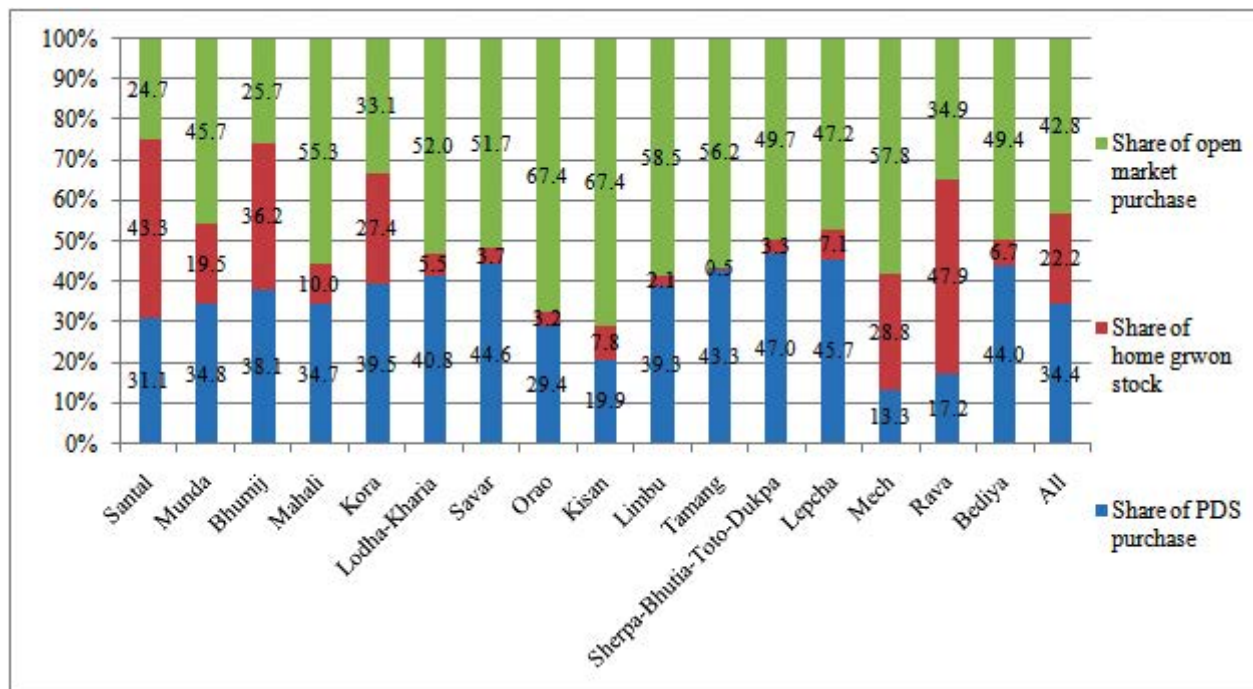
21 Khera (2011)

22 Although leakage in PDS was not as high for the Below Poverty Line (BPL) households (under which category, Adivasis mostly fell earlier) as the Above Poverty Line (APL) households, it cannot be ignored at all – 21 percent for BPL households in India, according to lowest estimate for 2011-12. See Dreze and Khera (2015).

23 As per NSS, the share of PDS rice was 10 percent of total consumption of rice for all social groups in rural areas of West Bengal in 2011-12. See GoI, MoSPI (2015).

24 In some tea gardens of North Bengal, the PDS food-grains were found to be distributed by the tea garden managements.

Figure 5.2a. Share of PDS purchase, home grown stock, and open market purchase of rice consumed by the Adivasis in West Bengal in the last one month preceding the survey by community (in percent)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

quality of rice from the open market. The case was similar with wheat/wheat flour – 92 percent of the surveyed households purchased PDS wheat/wheat flour in the month preceding the survey. Five percent of the households did not consume wheat (see Table A.5.4 in Appendix III). In fact, Adivasis did not have the tradition of cultivation or consumption of wheat flour in West Bengal. They mainly consumed it when it was received at subsidized rates through the FPSs. As a result, only 16 percent of the households were found to procure wheat from the open market; hardly any of them was found to cultivate wheat for consumption or sale.²⁵

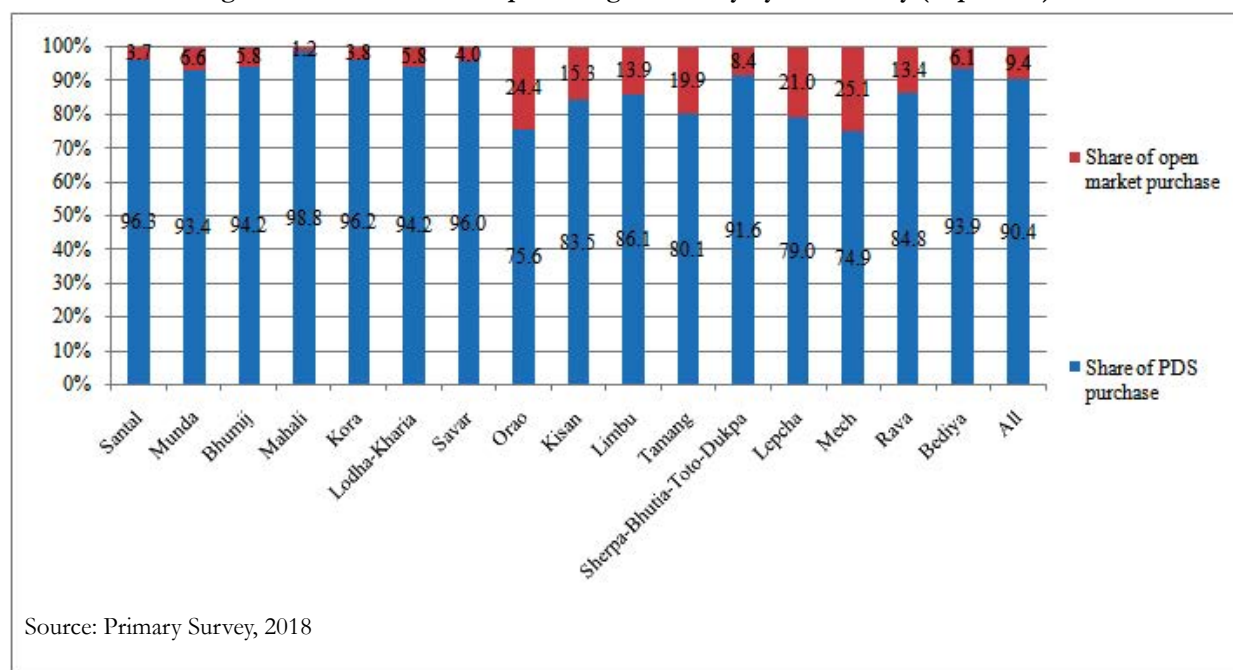
“We do not like wheat; but the ration dealer said that he would not give rice if we do not buy wheat. So, we buy.”

We thus see that unlike rice, use of wheat for regular consumption was not common practice: it is the PDS that has been inducing a change in the food habits of most of the Adivasis.

Note: 0.6 percent of consumed rice was procured as an exchange of agricultural wages in Hugli, Bardhaman, and Malda districts.

25 The farming of wheat is not common for other social groups also in West Bengal.

Figure 5.2b. Share of PDS purchase and open market purchase of wheat consumed by the Adivasis in West Bengal in the last one month preceding the survey by community (in percent)



However, there appeared inter-community variations in the procurement of food from the PDS. For example, the Sherpa-Bhutia group had the highest share of PDS rice (47%) followed by the Lepchas (46%), while the corresponding figures for the Mechs (13%) and Ravas (17%) were much smaller (see Figure 5.2a).²⁶ Similarly, while the Mahalis had the highest share of PDS wheat (99%) followed by the Santals (96%), the corresponding figures for Mechs (75%) and Oraons (76%) were relatively smaller (see Figure 5.2b).

26 However, the variation in procuring rice might have been influenced by some external factors: Due to political agitation for separate statehood by the Gorkha people, the functioning of the PDS remained suspended in Darjeeling district for long, and it was made effective only a few months before our survey was launched. The re-launching resulted in compensating for the backlog, and people of Darjeeling district were provided at the time of our survey with PDS food-grains in some excess to their regular monthly entitlement. Therefore, the share of PDS food-grain to total consumption increased among the Adivasis of Darjeeling at the time of our survey while the share of home grown stock or open market purchase was decreased.

It was true that the hill tribes of Darjeeling had little scope of rice cultivation and were more reliant on procuring the rice (main staple) from open market or PDS. Even then there was a case for discounting the externally influenced abnormality in the pattern of PDS procurement –supply of excess grain inducing higher amount of procurement from the PDS – and taking it as a deviation from the main trend. Taking this into consideration, the study found the Savars to be the highest procurers (45%) of PDS rice. As a group with failing legacy of food gathering and growing dependence on manual labour hiring, Savars were found to be the most food starved community. It was very natural for them to rely upon the PDS more than the other groups with relative food security.

Note: A negligible proportion of consumed wheat (0.1 percent) was procured from home grown stock.

Shortage of food among the Adivasis of West Bengal has added much importance to the households procuring food from the PDS. Responses of the Adivasis we have interacted with across the districts have reinforced the relevance. The context, thus, added to the hypothesis about the households procuring the entire amount of grains they were entitled to. However, the household level data showed some variation between the amount entitled and the quantity actually procured. Looking at the purchase-entitlement ratio (PER) for the surveyed households having Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) cards, we have found that the ratio of PDS food-grains (rice plus wheat flour) purchased and entitled to purchase was 86 percent in the month preceding the survey.²⁷ In other words, 14 percent of the entitlement was either not received or not purchased by the Antodaya cardholder Adivasis. However, there was wide inter-community variation in this regard. While the Bediyas were found to purchase 95 percent of their entitlement followed by the Bhumijs (94%), only 51 percent of their entitlement was found to be procured by the Kisans (the lowest) after the Ravas (54%)(see Figure 5.3). The ratio was higher among the hill Adivasis, the reason for which was related to the compensatory excess supply (discussed in footnote 26).²⁸ Whatever be the case, that under-utilisation of PDS entitlements as a reality was corroborated by the facts pertaining to the procurement by other categories of ration card holders.²⁹

The under-consumption of PDS food-grains by the Adivasi households seemed to be connected mainly to the leakage in distribution. In most areas people lacked enough information about their entitlement, and this had influenced the procurement pattern: “I don’t know how much I am supposed to get, so I take as much as the dealer gives me,” was a common response to our question on procurement.³⁰ The informational asymmetry was further added to by the

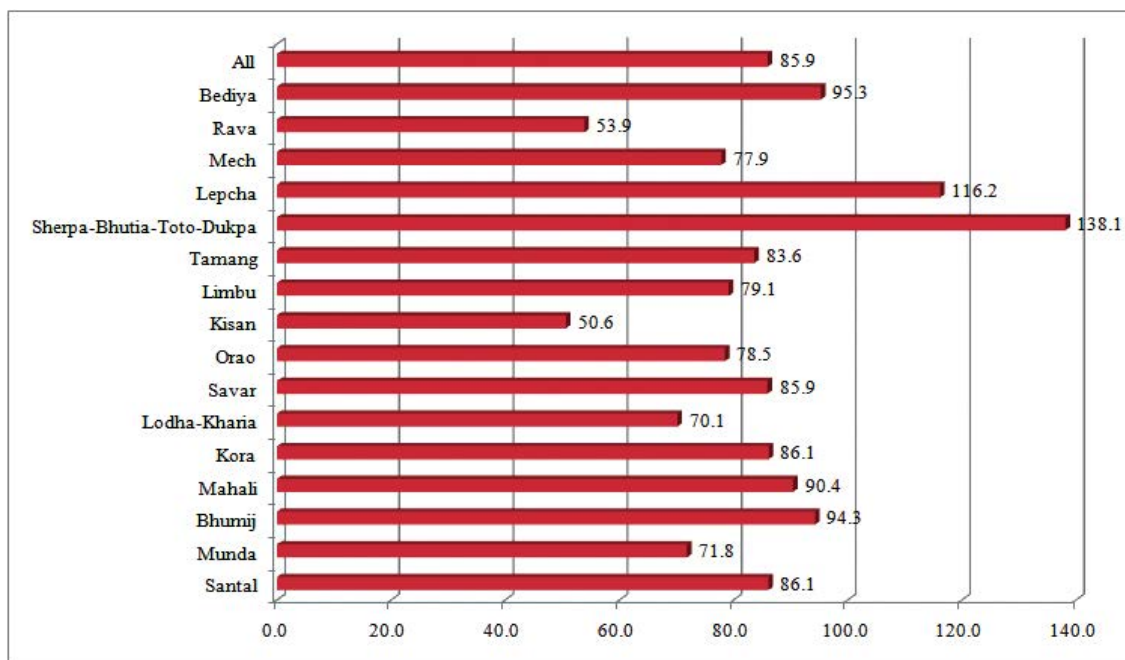
27 As per NFSA, the households possessing AAY card were entitled to 35 kilogram of food grains in a month for each household irrespective of the number of household members. See GoI, MoLJ (2013).

28 Reetika Khera found in her survey conducted in nine states other than West Bengal that the average PER for AAY and BPL cards was 84 per cent for all social groups. See Khera (2011).

29 As the ration cards viz. BPL and APL do not correspond to present categorisation of ration cards (consequently entitlements) that have come into effect after implementation of NFSA and as there were special packages for the households residing in Jangalmahal, Hill areas of Darjeeling, etc., we have avoided calculation of PER for holders of ration cards other than the AAY cards for the sake of convenience. For details of PDS entitlements in West Bengal, see GoWB (No Date).

30 Unlike the observation of Reetika Khera, few households in our survey were only found to be aware of their entitlements for food-grains. See Khera (2011).

Figure 5.3. Mean PER for the Adivasi households possessing AAY ration cards in West Bengal by community



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

malpractices of the dealers. Let us look at an example:

Mina Mandal, an old Kisan woman of Paschim Chandipur in Malda district, knew her entitlement and asked the dealer to give her the due. As an agricultural labourer Mina, could not arrange the food required for the household. The amount of food they produced in the year preceding the survey could sustain them for not more than a month. So, Mina and her husband were substantially dependent on the PDS for their survival and procured PDS food-grains every month. As a SPHH (Priority Household with Sugar) ration card holder, she asked the FPS for the due. But, the dealer gave one kilogram less rice than the actual allotment and argued that the deduction was to compensate the loss he faced due to wastage (*Bostar chal, gom pore pore kom hochchhe – ami kotha theke pabo?*)” The same argument was invoked for deducting the wheat from the allotment.

As in many other states, leakage of PDS food-grains has become an almost established tradition in West Bengal. Ration dealers resorted to various corrupt practices. The case of Rita Oraon of Luksan Tea Garden is another example: as a member of a tea garden worker household, Rita was issued AAY card for the household’s PDS entitlements. Surprisingly, a spelling error in the ration card was used by the dealer to deny them their due PDS food-grains. Rita was thus to purchase food-grains solely from the open market for their four-member household consisting of her husband and two children.

The practice of ration dealers keeping ration cards in their custody, a socially internalized feature at one point of time, was found to have reduced remarkably. It was found only in two percent of the cases and was seen to be higher for the Savar and Rava households – 13 and 17 percent respectively.

Nevertheless, despite its prevalence, our study has found that the problem of leakage that stirred the state of West Bengal in the last decade³¹ has substantially been restrained.

Another reason that kept the share of PDS food-grains to total consumption low was the complication of the process of implementation of the programme. Digitalisation of ration cards (as a part of implementation of NFSA) has further complicated the PDS coverage in West Bengal. In the process of implementation of NFSA, the Government of West Bengal has been issuing five types of digital ration cards to the consumers, namely, Antodaya Anna Yojana (AAY), Priority Household with Sugar (SPHH), Priority Household (PHH), Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana (RKSY)-I, and Rajya Khadya Suraksha Yojana (RKSY)-II with separate entitlements for each type of card.³² Our survey found that a substantial section of the households (35%) had not yet received the digitalised ration card for their PDS entitlements (see Table 5.3), which came into effect on 1 February, 2016. This left the households possessing old ration cards, namely, the APL, BPL, and 'Tea Garden (TG) card' absolutely at the mercy of the ration dealers for their entitlement of food-grains.³³ This was especially relevant for the Lodhas who were legitimate claimants of the AAY card as members of the 'Particularly Vulnerable Adivasi Group' (PVTG).³⁴ Many of the Lodha households possessing BPL cards and tea garden households possessing TG ration cards were found to be deprived of their full entitlements. The distribution of digital ration cards was found to be pending at the highest levels in Bankura district (90%) followed by Purulia district (83%) and the lowest in Malda district (four percent) following Darjeeling district (nine percent) at the

31 Bhattacharya and Rana (2008)

32 While implementing the NFSA in West Bengal, the Government of West Bengal introduced RKSY-I and RKSY-II to provide food security for those households that would remain outside the coverage of NFSA classifying consumers into three categories only viz. AAY, SPHH and PHH. See GoWB (No Date).

33 Before the implementation of NFSA, the tea garden management in West Bengal used to provide PDS food-grains to the workers as a component of their wage at a reduced rate (in Dooars and Terai @40 paise per kilogram and in the Darjeeling hills @45 paise per kilogram). The ration card issued for it was TG card.

34 As per the Supreme Court order in the right to food case, PVTGs are legitimate claimants for AAY cards (Khera 2011). Presently there are three tribes in West Bengal viz. Lodha, Birhor, Toto that are considered PVTG by the Government (GoI, MoTA, No Date).

time of survey (see Table A.5.5 in Appendix III). All the studied blocks of Jangalmahal districts—Bankura, Purulia, and Paschim Medinipur—performed rather poorly in this regard. However, the problem of coverage in its crude sense was not found to be very high. Only 12 households (one percent) did not have any ration card, and thus could not procure food from the PDS.

Table 5.3. Distribution of Adivasi household by type of ration card and by community (in percent)

Community	AAY	SPHH	PHH	RKSY I	RKSY II	BPL	APL	T.G. Card	Other	No Card	Sample size
Santal	9.6 (27)	28.2 (79)	7.5 (21)	2.1 (6)	0.7 (2)	45.7 (128)	2.9 (8)	0.4 (1)	2.1 (6)	0.7 (2)	280
Munda	38.6 (27)	15.7 (11)	8.6 (6)	1.4 (1)	1.4 (1)	21.4 (15)	7.1 (5)	2.9 (2)	1.4 (1)	1.4 (1)	70
Bhumij	8.6 (6)	15.7 (11)	7.1 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	64.3 (45)	2.9 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.4 (1)	70
Mahali	42.5 (17)	5.0 (2)	2.5 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	40.0 (16)	7.5 (3)	2.5 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	40
Kora	8.3 (5)	20.0 (12)	5.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	63.3 (38)	3.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Lodha-Kharia	53.3 (32)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	35.0 (21)	1.7 (1)	8.3 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Savar	66.7 (20)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	16.7 (5)	6.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (2)	30
Oraon	58.8 (47)	13.8 (11)	1.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	1.2 (1)	5.0 (4)	5.0 (4)	11.2 (9)	2.5 (2)	1.2 (1)	80
Kisan	14.0 (7)	48.0 (24)	34.0 (17)	2.0 (1)	2.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50
Limbu	93.3 (28)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Tamang	86.7 (52)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	8.3 (5)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	66.7 (20)	26.7 (8)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Lepcha	86.7 (26)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	30
Mech	13.3 (4)	40.0 (12)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	16.7 (5)	16.7 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	30
Rava	23.3 (7)	36.7 (11)	23.3 (7)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	6.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	30
Bediya	20.0 (10)	50.0 (25)	12.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	6.0 (3)	8.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	4.0 (2)	50
All	33.5 (335)	20.9 (209)	6.9 (69)	1.0 (10)	0.6 (6)	28.5 (285)	4.5 (45)	2.0 (20)	0.9 (9)	1.2 (12)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey 2018

Despite the shortcomings of leakage or coverage, as indicated in the analysis above, the PDS has become an important safeguard from hunger for the Adivasis of West Bengal. However, to fully utilise its potential for supporting the Adivasis to enhance their capability, the shortcomings in its implementation must be removed. For example, although sugar constituted an important component of PDS entitlements for the AAY and SPHH card holders in West Bengal, a majority of these card holders (65%) either did not receive it at all or received it irregularly. Besides these, the PDS in West Bengal seemingly suffered from a serious policy lacuna. We have earlier discussed that the Adivasis in West Bengal were encountering severe crisis of inadequacy of quality food resulting

in various nutritional problems.³⁵ Yet, the state has shown hardly any interest in incorporating commodities other than cereals in the PDS entitlement to improve the nutritional status of the people, though there are ample instances of other Indian states like Himachal Pradesh, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu providing commodities other than cereals like pulses and edible oil to its PDS consumers.³⁶ In the absence of delivery of nutritional food items other than cereals, the PDS in West Bengal has become a scheme for eliminating starvation rather than ensuring food security. It is extremely necessary to include commodities like pulses, edible oil and other similar items in the PDS to make the scheme a nutritional intervention. That the NFSA has categorically asked for provision of food and nutritional security to the population by ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food³⁷ must receive active acknowledgement and the PDS in West Bengal has to modify its policy to provide quality food to the people, particularly the Adivasis.

5.3 Constraints of Employment Opportunity and the MGNREGA

Like inadequacy of food, the problem of under-employment and unemployment has also been chronic to the Adivasis of West Bengal. Rain fed agriculture and forest based traditional economy left little scope of employment throughout the year for the Adivasis. The problem of unemployment historically thrust upon the Adivasis led them to take up seasonal migration even during the colonial period.³⁸ The depletion of primary resources of sustenance, namely, the land and the forest, added to the problem. Even migration to other states for non-agricultural work could not solve it. This explained why even after six decades of independence only 58 percent of the total Adivasi working population in West Bengal were main workers (getting work for six months or more) while the corresponding figure for all social groups was 74 percent.³⁹ It is important

35 We have mentioned earlier that more than two-fifth of Adivasi children (under five years) in West Bengal were underweight in 2015-16. Similarly, the Body Mass Index (BMI) for the Adivasi females in the age group of 15-49 years was below the normal for 33 per cent females in West Bengal in 2015-16. The corresponding figure for all social groups was 21 per cent. As far as the prevalence of anemia is concerned, 76 per cent Adivasi females in the age group of 15-49 years were found to be anemic in West Bengal in 2015-16 while the corresponding figure for all social groups was 62 per cent. With respect to children in the age group of 6-59 months, 68 per cent Adivasi children in West Bengal were found anemic in 2015-16. See IIPS and GoI, MoHFW (2017²)

36 Khera (2011)

37 GoI, MoLJ (2013)

38 Mazumdar (2016) and Rogaly (1999)

39 For the whole country, these figures were 65 and 75 per cent for the STs and all social groups respectively. Only states like Bihar (54%), Himachal Pradesh (53%), Uttar Pradesh (51%), Odisha (49%) and Jharkhand (46%) had the lower share of main workers vis-à-vis the STs than West Bengal in the 2011 Census.

to note that the share of main workers among the Adivasis of West Bengal had declined to 58 percent in the 2011 Census from 66 percent in the 2001 Census. Our survey figure pertaining to main workers (63%) was also corroborative of the Census figure. Tea garden workers who had earlier faced the problem of low wages were now also facing the problem of under-employment due to closure of tea gardens or declaration of the tea gardens as sick. The rate of unemployment was also found by our survey to be considerably high (seven percent). Thus, while the MGNREGA was enacted in India in 2005, it raised a ray of hope among the Adivasis that it would reduce the problem of under-employment and unemployment. For many Adivasi households in India, the programme constituted an essential safety net against starvation and destitution. This explained the higher share of MGNREG job card holders among the Adivasis (57%) in India than that of the average (38%) in 2011-12. In West Bengal, the corresponding figures were 64 percent and 60 percent respectively.⁴⁰

Our survey, however, found 85 percent Adivasi households holding MGNREG job cards. Ravas were ahead of all in this regard (100%) followed by Limbus and Lepchas (97% each), while the Mundas were at the bottom (67%). Interestingly, the traditionally hunting and gathering Adivasi groups, Lodha-Kharia and Savars, whose enrolment in the MGNREGA should have been higher, had a relatively low registration in the programme (73%) (see Table 5.4). As far as the district variation was concerned, Adivasis of all the districts were found to receive job cards in a range of 82 to 89 percent except Bardhaman (79%) (see Table A.5.6 in Appendix III). Households without job cards were not, however, found to be reluctant to apply for job cards. The proportion of households not applying for job cards was only three percent (see Table A.5.7 in Appendix III). Exclusion from MGNREGA enrolment was either due to their lack of knowledge regarding the process of getting the registration done or due to political victimisation or bureaucratic slackness (see Table A.5.7 in Appendix III). Some Adivasi households were found to depend exclusively on local political leaders or Panchayat members to enroll their names for job cards.

Rina Savar of a village in present Jhargram district had a five-member family. She badly needed work but could not find any. She was simply not given any work. She angrily asked, “Is it not the responsibility of the state to remain updated regarding the needs of its citizens and provide them with job cards or other such things? Why should we have to go and tell them [that we don’t have the card]?” (*Sorkarer ki jana nei, amader job card nei? Amra protibochhor vote dichchhi to, oder kortobyo eta jana kar ki nei. Amader ki nije giye bolte hobe naki?*). She was not wrong in her anger:

40 GoI, MoSPI (2015)

their survival was at stake. But for the forest which still supplied to them some produce in exchange of which they could buy food, their life “would have been extinct – *mori sori jetam*.” Like Rina, most Adivasi households in West Bengal had a dire necessity for job cards to find employment under the MGNREGA.

Table 5.4. Distribution of Adivasi households by MGNREG job card and MGNREG employment status (in last one year preceding the survey) and by community (in percent)

Community	Households having job card	Households received employment (as percent of job card holder)	Total households
Santal	84.6 (237)	40.1 (95)	280
Munda	67.1 (47)	36.2 (17)	70
Bhumij	82.9 (58)	48.3 (28)	70
Mahali	90.0 (36)	44.4 (16)	40
Kora	91.7 (55)	27.3 (15)	60
Lodha-Kharia	73.3 (44)	63.6 (28)	60
Savar	73.3 (22)	18.2 (4)	30
Oraon	90.0 (72)	54.2 (39)	80
Kisan	90.0 (45)	11.1 (5)	50
Limbu	96.7 (29)	75.9 (22)	30
Tamang	85.0 (51)	70.6 (36)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	90.0 (27)	85.2 (23)	30
Lepcha	96.7 (29)	62.1 (18)	30
Mech	93.3 (28)	60.7 (17)	30
Rava	100.0 (30)	63.3 (19)	30
Bediya	84.0 (42)	23.8 (10)	50
All	85.2 (852)	46.0 (392)	1000
(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)			

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

The performance of West Bengal in the delivery of MGNREGA has been anomalous. In aggregate it showed impressive results; while in 2018-19 the country average of providing employment was 51 person days per household, the corresponding figure for West Bengal was reported to be much higher – 77 person days. No state other than Mizoram (above 92 days) had a higher average of person days for each household. Even in 2017-18, West Bengal ranked after Mizoram and Meghalaya with an average of 60 person days for each household while the corresponding country average was 46 (see Table A.S.5.1 in Appendix II). This had a bearing on the increase in total employment generated under the programme.

However, a deeper investigation found that although the average days of employment provided for each household in West Bengal had increased in the successive years since 2016-17 (from 40 days in 2016-17 to 60 days in 2017-18 and 77 days in 2018-19), the number of households provided with work under MGNREGA had declined successively since 2016-17 (from 58 lakh in 2016-17 to 52 lakh in 2017-18 and 44 lakh in 2018-19)(see Table A.S.5.1 in Appendix II). What caused this inconsistency was, however, not clear. Had the number of households requiring jobs decreased? In other words, had a substantial mobile section of the West Bengal population actually become so economically upwardly mobile that they did not need to involve in manual work? The general reflection of the field did not indicate any such progress. We did not have the scope of probing the case in some depth to detect the other reasons – it required a specialized investigation, but the anomaly mentioned above was further corroborated by our field data.

Our field data reflected that only 46 percent of the MGNREG job card holding Adivasi households was provided with employment in the year preceding the survey. In other words, a majority of the Adivasi job card holders under the survey did not get MGNREG job in the last one year preceding the survey. As regards inter-community variations, the Sherpa-Bhutia group was the highest recipient of the MGNREG job (85%), while the Kisan people's participation was the lowest (11%) (see Table 5.4). However, Adivasis residing in tea gardens were found to be in a relatively better position than their counterparts living in revenue and forest villages. While 62 percent of the job card holding households residing in tea gardens got MGNREG jobs in the last one year preceding the survey, the corresponding figure for the revenue and forest villages was 41 percent. Importantly, while many of the North Bengal based Adivasis had somehow had relative advantage in terms of employment under MGNREG (60% of the total card holders), it was the opposite for several of the Adivasi groups of South Bengal (less than 30% of the total card holders were provided jobs) (see Table 5.4). The inter-district variations were also striking: from 83 percent in Hooghly to 16 percent in Purulia. Adivasis of Malda, Bardhaman, North 24 Parganas, and Bankura were also found to be much disadvantaged in terms of employment guarantee (see Table A.5.6 in Appendix III).

As in the case of enrolment in the programme, the provision of job through MGNREGA appeared more as a supply side problem than a demand side one. Our survey found only nine percent job card holding households who did not apply for a job under the programme (see Table 5.5). The major reason behind the exclusion of the Adivasis from MGNREG jobs seemed to be linked with the failure of the state to generate employment in study areas in the year preceding

the survey: 29 percent job card holding Adivasi households reported that they did not see any MGNREG scheme to be taken up in their areas in the year preceding the survey. Purulia was the worst performer in this regard followed by Bardhaman: Two thirds of the job card holding households of Purulia and Bardhaman reasoned their not being provided with jobs with that of absence of work in their respective localities (see Table A.5.6 in Appendix III). Sections of job card holders related their exclusion to that of informational gap (four percent) or political victimisation (three percent).

Table 5.5. Distribution of MGNREG job card holding Adivasi households by reason for not doing job (in percent)

Households	Reasons for not doing MGNREG job	Frequency	Percent
Not doing MGNREG job	Not demanded for job	73	8.6
	Not demanding job due to problem in payment of wage	10	1.2
	MGNREG scheme not taking place	248	29.1
	Inadequate job	1	0.1
	Not getting prior information about job to demand	36	4.2
	Demanded job but not provided	5	0.6
	Not getting job due to political victimization	23	2.7
	Not provided as Govt. Housing scheme sanctioned	7	0.8
	Not provided as bank account yet to open	2	0.2
	Other	12	1.4
	No response	43	5.0
	Total	460	54.0
HH doing MGNREG job		392	46.0
Total Household		852	100.0

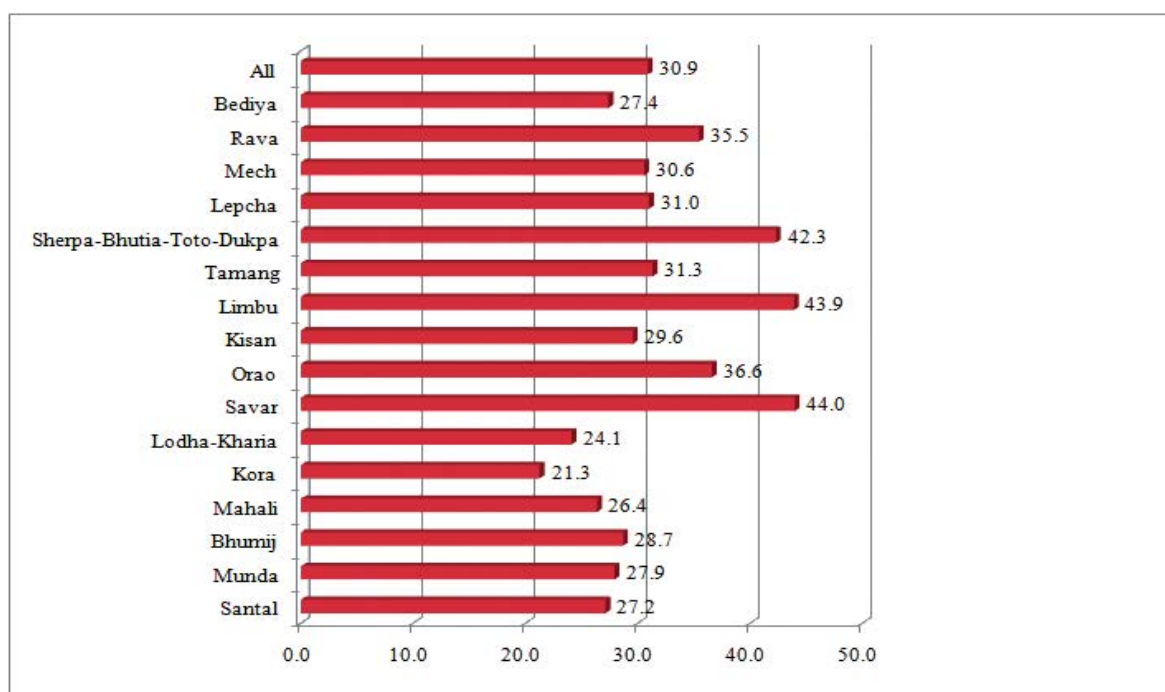
Source: Primary Survey, 2018

It was not possible to compare our survey data with that of the official data because of (a) difference in the constituencies – the official figures pertained to all social groups while our survey was limited to the Adivasis, and (b) time difference in the two sources. Yet, the strikingly low employment opportunity of the Adivasis as found by our survey (31 days on average in the year preceding the survey) cannot but raise serious concerns. The general trend of Adivasis having to face adverse treatment in terms of employment under the MGNREGA across the country add particular urgency to examine the case critically and find immediate solutions to the problem.⁴¹ Apart from the general

41 For example, a report on implementation of MGNREGA in Adivasi areas of Andhra Pradesh, showed (from official data) that while the average person-days in Andhra Pradesh (excluding Telangana but including Adivasi areas) was more than 54 days in 2013-14, the corresponding figure for the Adivasi areas was little more than 43 days only. See Maiorano and Buddha (2014).

deprivation, our survey also showed some Adivasi groups being inflicted more than others. While the average days of employment for most of the studied Adivasi communities was below the average of all groups, a few groups under the survey had figures above the said average (see Figure 5.4). The inter-district variations ranging between 17 (Bankura) and 39 (Darjeeling) person days added further complication to the issue (see Table A.5.6 in Appendix III).

Figure 5.4. Average days of employment provided for each Adivasi household under MGNREGA in one year preceding the survey by community



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

The poor performance of the MGNREGA was also demonstrated by the government's failure or reluctance to implement the legal guarantee of providing unemployment allowances when the government failed to provide at least 100 days employment to each rural household. Our survey found hardly any household getting the compensation despite their not having been provided with the job mandated by law. Indeed, most of the state governments have been using various escape routes to evade paying unemployment allowances.⁴² As a natural consequence, Adivasis became the worst victims of this evasion. As MGNREGA is a demand driven legislation, people can get work only on demand. But the usual practice of providing MGNREG jobs in West Bengal was to offer employment without application for the work. Hence, in the absence of any application for jobs, it has become very easy for the government to escape the 'burden' of unemployment allowances. In addition to that, hardly any

⁴² Khera (2008²)

respondent in our survey was found to be aware of unemployment allowances. Even if people applied for jobs on record, owing to the lack of knowledge about the allowance, the allowance issue could easily be bypassed by the government. Lack of knowledge of the people regarding provisions of the Act and its implementation process has in fact become a tool for the government to deprive the people of their rights. In an impact assessment survey conducted in the Adivasi predominant districts of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa, it was found that the problem of lack of awareness was the primary reason for their not receiving unemployment allowances. Collection of receipts after applying for jobs, was completely unknown to the job card holders, resulting in the government evading the unemployment allowances.⁴³

Violation of rights under the MGNREGA was further substantiated by the pattern of payment of wages. As per official records, West Bengal remained at the top after Punjab in 2014-15 for delayed payment of wages for MGNREG jobs—in West Bengal it was delayed in 92 percent cases, following Punjab, which had a delay in 93 percent cases.⁴⁴ Our survey found that the payment was delayed in 88 percent cases. Payment within the stipulated period of 15 days was made only in 12 percent cases.⁴⁵ The average delay in payment was 92 days (see Table 5.6). The delay in payment has at least partly made the MGNREGA less attractive for many of the surveyed households. As Khapo Mandi of Belpahari told us,

“Look, I had worked in the month of *Aghan* (Agrahayan, December); now it’s the month of *Chait* (Chaitra, April), but have not yet received the payment. Also, I do not know when I will receive the payment. I have visited the Panchayat office several times. They repeated the same answer – you will get it when funds come...Tell me, if there was no fund, why did they employ us? We could have worked elsewhere – it was the month of *Aghan*, and harvesting was going on...Since I do not have anything to eat I work, I buy food with the wage; now if they do not make the payment on time, what should I eat? And, why should I work under the NREGA?”

43 See Banerjee and Saha (2010).

44 Aggarwal (2016)

45 As per MGNREGA, the disbursement of daily wages is to be made within 15 days from the date of work done. See GoI, MoLJ (2005).

Table 5.6. Distribution of valid cases of payment of wages or its due for MGNREG job done by Adivasis and mean/median for delay in payment

Type of cases		Frequency	Percent to total valid cases	Percent to valid cases of payment or pending/due	Delay in payment or period of due (days)	
					Mean	Median
Payment made	Payment within stipulated period	23	6.0	11.9		
	Payment delayed	170	44.3	88.1	91.5	60.0
	Total	193	50.3	100.0		
Payment due	Payment due and stipulated period expired	184	47.9	96.3	108.2	90.0
	Payment due but stipulated period not expired	7	1.8	3.7		
	Total	191	49.7	100.0		
Total		384	100.0			

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Aside of the above, there were allegations of corruption by the MGNREG functionaries in connivance with bank officials and panchayat members to siphon off a part of payments of card holders. “To siphon off the funds, the supervisors of MGNREG schemes are keeping the job cards and the bank pass books in their custody,” said a villager of Purulia. At Kalimpong, a job card holder complained,

“The supervisor of the scheme collected from me my job card and bank pass book. He has been keeping those in his custody. I have not seen the cards with my eyes for years. He draws my wage from my bank account. The bank manager helps him doing this. Is the manager doing this free? He must be getting some share for his service. Otherwise why should he do an illegal thing? The supervisor gives me some money. What can I do? I take as much as he gives. When I tried to protest he threatened me...He can actually do much harm. He can entangle me in false police [criminal] cases. I have nobody to support me. The local *netas* play in his hands. He himself is also a *neta*. So, he does, what he does.”^{46,47}

Similar was the case of Babulal Murmu of Mandalgram in Bardhaman. His passbook was reportedly kept by the supervisor in his custody and used to withdraw wages due to the workers from the Bank. Babulal neither could know the amount of his deposit nor the information of deposit in his bank account.

Ratan Tudu, an illiterate wage labourer of Baraboni block in Bardhaman district, was astonished when he came to know the amount of wages officially deposited

46 Notably this supervisor himself was also an Adivasi hailing from the Tamang community.

47 13 per cent job cards in our survey were found to be in the custody of the supervisors.



Being in nothingness: Dangerous dwelling in tea garden

in his bank account. Upon being informed by our investigator of the amount mentioned in his job card, he reacted that he had never seen that much money in his life time!

Corruption in the process of payment made Parimal Sardar of Dwarir Jungle (an island in the Sundarbans) in North 24 parganas district so irritated that he refused to work under the MGNREG anymore. A few years ago he worked for an MGNREG scheme and was paid only Rs 700 for 14 days of work. After that, he decided not to work again in MGNREG schemes (*Ekbar 14 din kaj korar por matro 700 taka diyechhilo. Baki taka deyni. Tai kaj kori na*). Like other states,⁴⁸ allegations of corruption in the implementation of MGNREGA in West Bengal were made by many of the surveyed households across the districts— from the hills of North Bengal to the islands of Sundarbans and in the Jangalmahal area in the west.

⁴⁸ For example, similar incidents of corruption were observed in Jharkhand. See, Aggarwal (2016).

For all practical purposes, the violation of entitlements and the corruptions in payment of wages have reduced, to a large extent, the MGNREGA in West Bengal from a social security scheme to an unreliable intervention. In a study participant's wit, "the 100 days' work programme is as uncertain as the changed monsoon – it may rain, it may not." While the Central Government's de-emphasis on the programme, reflected in reducing allocations under this head, has gravely affected its implementation, the state level problems have been adding to its further disruption. Studies have demonstrated its potential to improve the socio-economic status of people, but respective governments seemed to have taken a reverse route.⁴⁹

5.4 Housing and Sanitation

Housing needs of the Adivasis in India have not been similar to the needs of other social groups. Differences in cultural settings and socio-economic conditions have had an impact on the differences in housing patterns and requirements among different social groups. For example, Arjun Kumar identified that congestion was the highest contributing factor for housing shortage in rural areas of India.⁵⁰ But, our investigation found many of the Adivasi households not to be bothered by this. A village study carried out in 1961 in erstwhile Medinipur district found that the Adivasis were residing in the study village in single living rooms despite absence of any dearth of homestead lands there.⁵¹ Why was it so? It was linked to culture: they used the shed on the courtyard and the verandah surrounding the main room for living. Again, how economic conditions have more often than not shaped culture was reinforced by many of our respondents not attributing any importance to toilets as an integral part of housing. The construction drew from their material conditions: other unmet needs—repairing, extension, and maintenance of the house—and lower degree of health awareness—the connection between using of toilets and decrease in water borne diseases for example—often blocked their way to advance towards what is called modern day improvement. Therefore, publicly supported housing schemes as part of social security programmes had found their relevance as an important intervention for the Adivasis to have better housing for quality life. Adivasis are still considerably behind many social groups regarding housing. According to the 2011 Census, the proportion of households having houses in good condition was 41 percent for the Adivasis; in contrast, the figure was much

49 In the earlier mentioned survey in Maoist influenced Adivasi predominant districts of Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and Orissa, it was found that while the implementation of MGNREGA had increased the agricultural wages on the one hand, on the other it reduced the out-migration as well. See Banerjee and Saha (2010).

50 Kumar (2014)

51 GoI (No date)

higher for the average population of the country (53%). Corresponding figures for West Bengal were 28 percent and 41 percent for the Adivasis and all social groups respectively. No state except Odisha (19% for Adivasis) had a lower performance in this regard than that of West Bengal. Similarly, as the said Census figures revealed, while married couples of 10 percent Adivasi households in the country did not have a separate room, the corresponding figure for all social groups was eight percent. The scenario in West Bengal was exactly the same.

In corroboration with the Census figures, the Working Group on rural housing constituted by the Planning Commission in 2011 identified temporary houses as the highest contributing factor for the housing shortage in rural areas of India.⁵² According to Census 2011, the proportion of households having temporary houses in the country was 17 percent for both STs and the SCs while it was 12 percent for all social groups.⁵³ The West Bengal figures were 26, 20, and 14 percent for STs, SCs and all social groups respectively.

Worst is the case of availability of toilets among the Adivasi households. According to the 2011 Census, only 23 percent Adivasi households in India had toilets; in contrast, for all social groups it was 47 percent. The corresponding figures for West Bengal were 24 and 59 percent for Adivasis and all social groups respectively.

The macro picture adds crucial importance to the implementation of the housing programme for the Adivasis of West Bengal. However, the role of the government to meet the housing needs of the Adivasis was found to be lesser than required. Although the first housing programme for rural areas, the Village Housing Scheme, was introduced in 1957,⁵⁴ 13 percent households in our survey were still found to live in temporary houses. Bediyas were found to live in temporary houses most (34%) (see Table 5.7). While mud walls and thatched roofs were found to be a common feature for a considerable number of Adivasi houses in South Bengal, hardly any Adivasi household in North Bengal was found to be using temporary materials for constructing houses. Spatially, our survey found most temporary houses in Birbhum district (31%) followed by North 24 Parganas (29%) (see Table A.5.8 in Appendix III). The proportion of temporary houses among the Adivasis was lower in our survey than that of the Census figures, yet they strongly reinforced the housing disadvantage of the

52 GoI, MoRD (2011)

53 As per NSS, Adivasis were suffering from this problem next to SCs only: the proportion of households having kutcha houses was 11, 10, and seven percent for the SCs, STs, and all social groups respectively in 2012. See GoI, MoSPI (2014).

54 Nayar (1997)

Adivasis.⁵⁵ To explain the unsatisfactory performance of the government to support the Adivasis for their housing needs, the Bhuria Commission stated that although the construction of houses for the Adivasis had been given impetus from 1983-84 onwards, it could not meet the requirement due to constraints of resource and absence of any clear policy to meet the requirement.⁵⁶

Table 5.7. Distribution of Adivasi households by type of structure of occupied houses and by community (in percent)

Community	Permanent	Semi-Permanent	Temporary	Unclassified	Sample size
Santal	19.6 (55)	60.0 (168)	20.4 (57)	0.0 (0)	280
Munda	48.6 (34)	41.4 (29)	8.6 (6)	1.4 (1)	70
Bhumij	24.3 (17)	60.0 (42)	15.7 (11)	0.0 (0)	70
Mahali	50.0 (20)	35.0 (14)	15.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	40
Kora	25.0 (15)	55.0 (33)	20.0 (12)	0.0 (0)	60
Lodha-Kharia	36.7 (22)	48.3 (29)	15.0 (9)	0.0 (0)	60
Savar	56.7 (17)	20.0 (6)	23.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	30
Orao	72.5 (58)	22.5 (18)	5.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	80
Kisan	66.0 (33)	32.0 (16)	2.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	50
Limbu	96.7 (29)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Tamang	96.7 (58)	3.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	93.3 (28)	6.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Lepcha	76.7 (23)	23.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Mech	96.7 (29)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Rava	90.0 (27)	10.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Bediya	34.0 (17)	32.0 (16)	34.0 (17)	0.0 (0)	50
All	48.2 (482)	38.7 (387)	13.0 (130)	0.1 (1)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

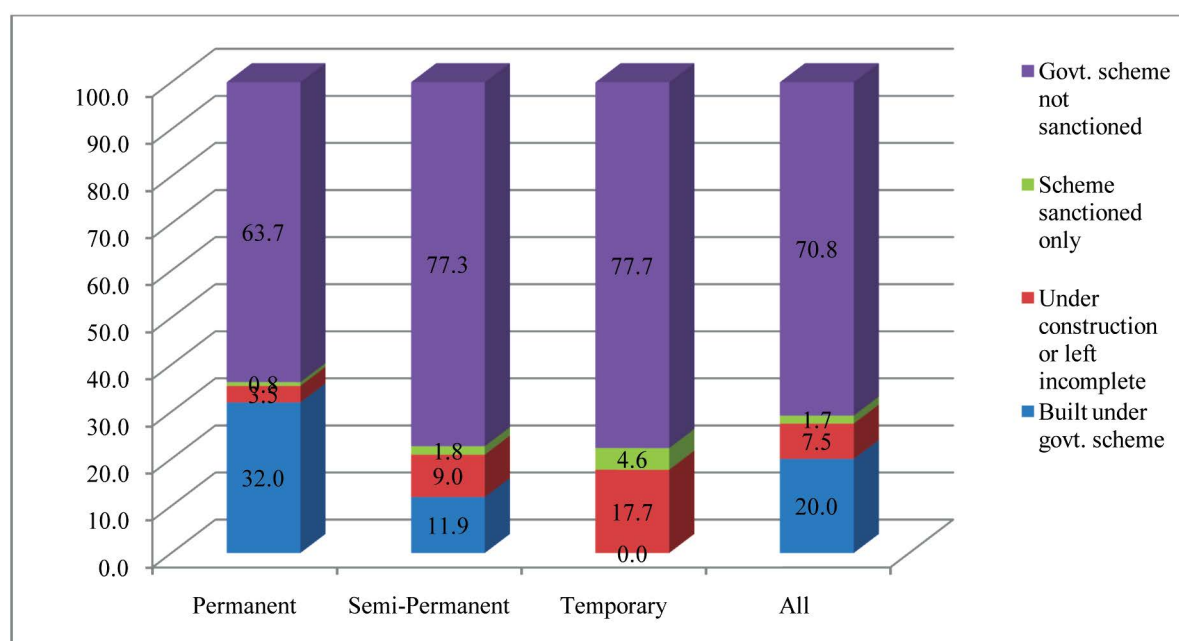
Looking at the share of houses built under government schemes to the total houses, we found that only 20 percent Adivasi households in West Bengal had built their houses under various government schemes. When added to it the houses that were under construction or left incomplete or merely sanctioned, the proportion increased only to 29 percent. In other words, more than two thirds of the Adivasi households in West Bengal did not receive any government support to build their houses. However, a considerable proportion of these

⁵⁵ As per Census 2011, 29 percent Adivasi households had temporary houses in rural areas of West Bengal.

⁵⁶ GoI (2004)

houses (that received no support from the government) were tea gardens quarters (23%), many of which were in a dilapidated condition at the time of our survey. Probing deeper, we found that nearly one third of the households currently residing in permanent houses could have improved their housing status with the help of government housing schemes. On the other hand, more than three-fourths of the households residing in temporary houses were yet to be provided with any support to improve their housing status (see Figure 5.5). It may be worth mentioning that some households residing in temporary houses could not complete the sanctioned houses due to their having to divert part of the funds received under government housing schemes for other purposes like medical treatment and so on.

Figure 5.5. Share of houses built under government schemes for different type of houses occupied by the Adivasi households in West Bengal (in percent)

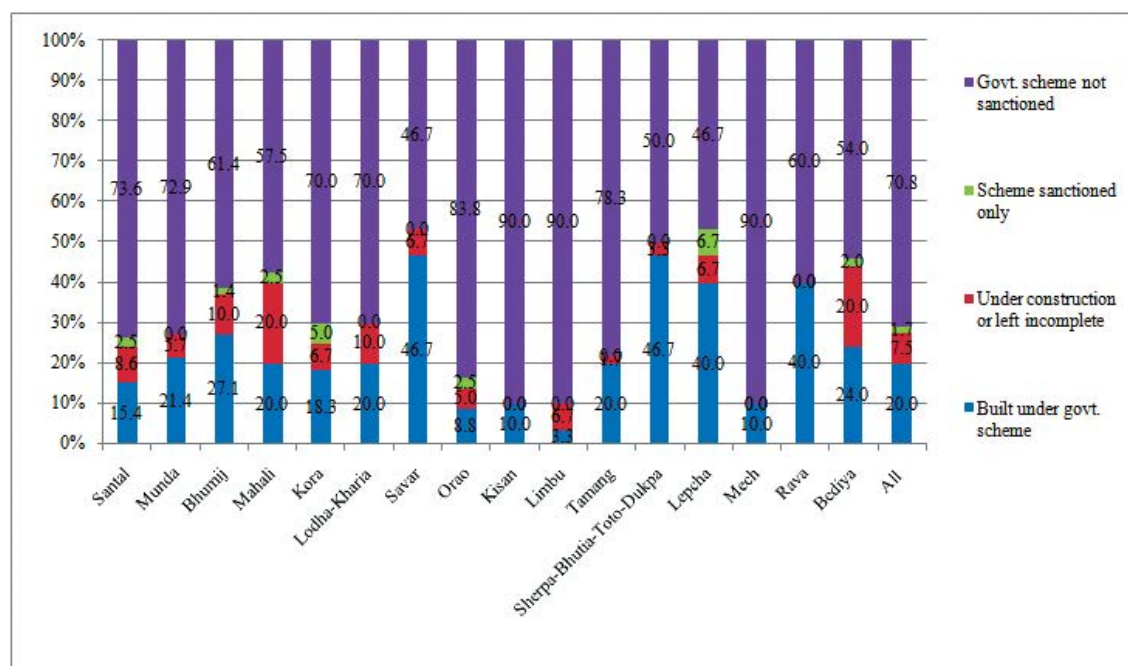


Source: Primary Survey, 2018

However, disaggregating the data, we find that while Savars benefitted most from government housing schemes along with the Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpas (47% households of each community built houses under government schemes), the Limbus benefitted the least from the same (only a single household) (see Figure 5.6 for details). Understandably, communities with better housing status were found to benefit less from government housing schemes (see Table 5.7 and see Figure 5.6). But, it was not the other way around; communities with poor housing status were not necessarily provided with the required public support for housing. For example, 73 percent of the Oraons, who formed an overwhelming majority in tea gardens, had the official status of living in permanent houses. But,

in reality, most of the houses were dilapidated or required major repairs. Yet, a majority of those officially living in permanent houses (84%) did not receive any housing support from the government. Indeed, the proportion of tea garden households provided with housing support from the government was found to be very low in our survey (16%), while it was better in the revenue and forest villages (32%). Surprisingly, communities who had neither the capacity to build permanent houses on their own nor a substantial presence in tea gardens or such areas to have permanent structure quarters, however poor in condition, were also not found to be supported by government housing schemes reasonably. Thus, only 26 percent of the Santal households were provided with housing support.

Figure 5.6. Distribution of Adivasi households by share of houses built under government schemes and by community (in percent)



Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Considering the district variations in this regard, our survey found that the Adivasis residing in North 24 Parganas were in some advantage (46%), followed by Purulia district (45%). That districts like Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri, which had a higher share of permanent houses (85% each, despite the contention on the actual status), received lower support from government housing schemes (29% and 20% respectively) could somehow be justified by the government – by presenting the official data. But why districts like Bankura and Paschim Medinipur with a lower share of permanent houses (11% and 17% respectively) received lower support from government housing schemes (30% and 29%

respectively) was hard to comprehend (see Table A.5.8 and Table A.5.9 in Appendix III).

Overall, it can be said that neither the better status of housing nor its lower status was necessarily linked with proper implementation of government housing schemes for the Adivasis in West Bengal. This was strikingly reinforced by the difference in real requirement and actual provision found by our survey: While the proportion of households with natural eligibility for housing support (AAV, SPHH, PHH, RKSU-I, BPL, and TG ration card holders) was 93 percent, the actual provision was for only 29 percent.

While a majority of the Adivasi households were excluded from government assistance for improving their housing status, households receiving government support were also found to have faced problems in realising the amount sanctioned for their houses. Local political leaders across the districts were allegedly involved in various corrupt practices, including taking bribe from the Adivasi households for 'helping' in getting the houses sanctioned under various government housing schemes.

Ananda Sardar of Sandeshkhali in North 24 Parganas district allegedly paid Rs 10,000 to the local political leader one year previous to our survey for getting a housing project sanctioned under the Pradhan Mantri Awas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G) scheme. The case of Fredrick Oraon, a tea garden worker of Jalpaiguri district, was similar but the difference was that in his case the local political leader allegedly took a lesser amount – Rs 5,000. Rabin Soren of Bundwan block in Purulia district could not even complete his house sanctioned under the Indira Awas Yojana (IAY) for want of funds. The money he received had to be spent on his medical treatment, as his household finance was already shattered with him paying a huge sum of Rs 10,000 as bribe to the local political leader.

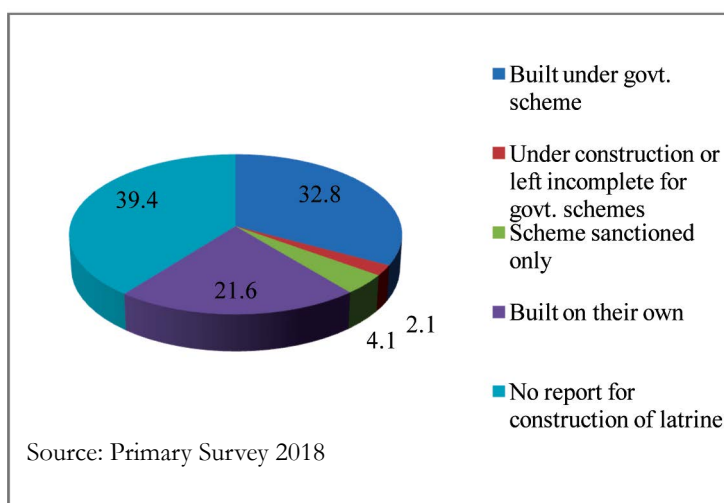
The corrupt practices of the nexus involved in the implementation of the public programmes have not only been causing harm to the public interventions but also intruding into the moral world of Adivasis, which, so far, had kept itself free from the adulterating social influences like selfishness and deceit. Let us look at the case of Mukul Hansda of Sriniketan block in Birbhum district who could manage two houses for his family under the PMAY-G scheme sanctioned separately for himself and his father by paying Rs 30,000 to local hoodlums as bribe.

Altogether, 28 percent of households benefitting from government housing schemes (combining all stages) reported that they had had to pay bribes for their houses being sanctioned under government housing schemes. The amount of

bribe given to the leaders was found to be Rs 6,000 on average. Notably, the majority of these houses (for which bribes were given) were sanctioned under IAY scheme (56%).⁵⁷ Nevertheless, 42 percent of the housing projects under PMAY-G (for which bribes were given) were sanctioned in the last two years preceding the survey.⁵⁸

However, the case of construction of toilets was different: corruption of a considerable degree was not found to occur. The absence of corruption in the construction of toilets might be related to the socially constructed disinterest of the Adivasis to set up toilets at home and the smaller amount of monetary involvement in the scheme, which did not offer the plunderers much gain as the Adivasis would not agree to bribe for a toilet. However, in contrast to the case of housing (20%), the figure for toilets constructed by households under the government scheme was 33 percent. If we add to it toilets that were under construction or left incomplete or merely sanctioned, the proportion increases to 39 percent (see Figure 5.7) which was 29 percent in case of housing. It is to be noted here that 39 percent of the Adivasi households were yet to construct toilets. The proportion of tribal households that constructed toilets on their own was 22 percent.

Figure 5.7. Distribution of Adivasi households by share of latrines built under government schemes and built on their own (in percent)



Probing deeper, we find that toilets were constructed with government support mostly by the Ravas (77%) while they were constructed on their own mostly by the Lepchas and Limbus (83% each) followed by Tamangs (80%). It is to be noted here that the hill tribes of North Bengal not only constructed toilets mostly on their own but the proportion of households without toilet facilities were also lowest among them (see Table 5.8). In fact, most households of North Bengal based tribes except Kisans already had the facilities of toilets or were about to construct the same. However, state support on this was

⁵⁷ Altogether 48 percent houses were sanctioned under the IAY scheme and 30 per cent houses were sanctioned under the PMAY-G scheme. A considerable proportion of houses was sanctioned under the Gitanjali scheme also which was exclusively a state government housing scheme.

⁵⁸ The Pradhan Mantri Awaas Yojana – Gramin (PMAY-G), the restructured erstwhile housing scheme called IAY, came into effect from 1 April 2016. See GoI, MoRD (No date).

very high or substantial for the Ravas or Mechs, but not for Lepchas, Limbus, or Tamangs. The South Bengal based Adivasis like Bhumij and Lodhas were hardly found to have constructed toilets on their own. None of the Savar and Lodha households constructed toilets on their own. This trend was found only among the Ravas in North Bengal.

Table 5.8. Distribution of Adivasi households by share of toilets built under government schemes and by community (in percent)

Community	Built under govt. scheme	Under construction or left incomplete for govt. schemes	Scheme sanctioned only	Built on their own	No report for construction of toilets	Sample size
Santal	30.7 (86)	6.1 (17)	5.4 (15)	6.4 (18)	51.4 (144)	280
Munda	38.6 (27)	2.9 (2)	5.7 (4)	4.3 (3)	48.6 (34)	70
Bhumij	45.7 (32)	0.0 (0)	4.3 (3)	4.3 (3)	45.7 (32)	70
Mahali	25.0 (10)	2.5 (1)	12.5 (5)	15.0 (6)	45.0 (18)	40
Kora	40.0 (24)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (2)	11.7 (7)	45.0 (27)	60
Lodha-Kharia	8.3 (5)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	11.7 (7)	78.3 (47)	60
Savar	26.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	66.7 (20)	30
Orao	42.5 (34)	0.0 (0)	3.8 (3)	31.2 (25)	22.5 (18)	80
Kisan	50.0 (25)	0.0 (0)	2.0 (1)	20.0 (10)	28.0 (14)	50
Limbu	6.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	83.3 (25)	6.7 (2)	30
Tamang	11.7 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	80.0 (48)	8.3 (5)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	33.3 (10)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	50.0 (15)	13.3 (4)	30
Lepcha	6.7 (2)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	83.3 (25)	6.7 (2)	30
Mech	43.3 (13)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	43.3 (13)	13.3 (4)	30
Rava	76.7 (23)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (3)	13.3 (4)	30
Bediya	40.0 (20)	0.0 (0)	6.0 (3)	16.0 (8)	38.0 (19)	50
All	32.8 (328)	2.1 (21)	4.1 (41)	21.6 (216)	39.4 (394)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

Looking at the district variations in this regard, it was found that government supported toilets were mostly constructed in Hugli district (76%), and the lowest number of such constructions were in Paschim Medinipur district (14%). If we add to these figures toilets that were under construction or left incomplete or merely sanctioned, the proportion increases to 79 percent for Hugli and 28 percent for Paschim Medinipur (see Table A.5.10 in Appendix III).

With their inability to build a house on their own, Adivasis were found to be desperate to bargain for a house under government schemes and took the bribe involved in the process to be normal. They were also found to be keen to build toilets (with some variations) subject to the availability of government support. However, the response of the government to meet the housing requirements of the Adivasis did not seem to be as reciprocal as it should have been. This

tended to keep the share of government supported housing substantially low.⁵⁹ This difference in state initiative, however, did not matter much to the Adivasis residing in North Bengal, particularly in Darjeeling district, as they had different geo-environmental, cultural, and economic settings which were conducive to setting up houses even without government support. Thus, the observation made by the Bhuria Commission regarding housing shortage appears to be valid till date for the Adivasis in West Bengal as they are still suffering from the constraint of resource and absence of clear policies to solve the problem of housing.

The lack of clarity at the policy level was best exemplified by the designs of the houses under the government schemes. Firstly, in most cases the roof was made of asbestos, which bears risk of silicosis for the residents. It is an ethical issue, and as scientists and health experts have pointed out, use of asbestos by the government was a clear violation of ethics. Secondly, most Adivasi groups have been culturally oriented to open houses with wide spaces, but the government supported houses we have seen did not have a grain of conformity with the tradition of the Adivasis. A uniform, one-size-fits-all, model of housing thrust upon the people goes against the very essence of civilization. Unfortunate as it is, the issue has not so far received much critical attention.

5.5 Concluding Remark

Publicly supported social security schemes bear particular relevance for the Adivasis, and the announced supports under various schemes must be seen as rights rather than state largesse. The state and dominant society have thrust upon the Adivasis a life full of misery. The state sponsored social security programmes for the Adivasis, from a moral point of view, can be seen only as partial compensation to the huge loss inflicted on Adivasi life – its local moral world and dignity. Unfortunate as it is, the small compensations in the form of social security programmes hardly reach the Adivasis in their declared forms. Our study found a considerable gap between the explicit goals of the programmes and their actual realisation.

Despite the NFSA's categorical mandate for ensuring access to adequate quantity of quality food, the state of West Bengal has hardly shown any interest in providing any nutritional supplement other than the cereals supplied through

59 It is to be mentioned here that the present survey did not capture data on housing conditions and the congestion problem for the Adivasis that constitute two important components of housing shortage. Hence, it may be guessed that if those factors were to be taken into consideration, the state support for the improvement of the housing status of the Adivasis would be found even worse than what we find from the present survey.

PDS. Despite the severe problem of under-employment and unemployment, employment generated for the Adivasis under the MGNREGA was found to be very low in West Bengal. Though housing needs were found to be severe for the Adivasis in West Bengal, there was no development to ensure an immediate solution. Above all, leakage and corruption have become all pervasive in West Bengal resulting in shrinkage of opportunities for Adivasis to avail the social security supposed to be provided for them.

Crucially important as they are, the publicly arranged social security initiatives encounter a problem at the very beginning, namely, identification. For example, 75 percent of the 10 years and above population did not have Scheduled Tribe (ST) Certificates. Getting the ST certificates was reported to be a hugely cumbersome job. During our field work Tarini Oraon of Kalchini, Jalpaiguri asked us whether we could help him get his ST certificate, for which he had applied three years ago. “I have been visiting the office every week, but they are not giving me anything. I asked them about the problem. Should I submit any other document? But there was no clear response. They asked me to visit later. Don’t know when that ‘later’ day will come.” On returning to Kolkata, we contacted one of the state government officials who was very helpful and arranged for disbursing Tarini’s ST certificate within a week. But how many of them could accidentally meet people who could help in getting them their certificates which should be disbursed in the normal course? The most affected communities were Kisan, Lodha-Kharia, Savar, Munda. The problem of the Kisans, as stated by the community members in the district of Malda, was related to the state government’s decision to accept them as STs. Nevertheless, some other communities whose ST status did not involve any controversy also reportedly faced the problem of not having any document validating their Adivasi status.

One fifth of the surveyed population above 10 years of age did not have bank accounts. This meant their having to be excluded from the social security programmes, like school scholarship, MGNREGA, etc.⁶⁰ The problem was found to be most severe in Purulia district and among the Savars.

The extent of non-possession of Aadhar was low – five percent. But the district and community level variations affected some areas and populations more than others. That nearly one fourth of the Savars and one eighth of the Lodha-Kharia population under the survey did not possess the Aadhar card, meant they were unable to benefit from the social security programmes, most of which have been made contingent on the possession of Aadhar (see Table A.5.11 in Appendix III).

⁶⁰ Our survey, however, found few people only to be deprived from the job card in the absence of any bank account.

As regards health insurance, more than half (55%) of the surveyed population above 10 years of age did not have any kind of health insurance coverage. Like others, this problem too had spatial and community-wise variations: With Darjeeling being the most affected district, followed by Malda, North 24 Parganas and Paschim Medinipur, the communities that faced this exclusion the most were the Lepcha, Limbu, Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa, Savar and Lodha-Kharia.

As Sanadi Savar of Purulia ridiculed the government,

Everybody says, the government is doing many things for us. *Ghanta karinche, kalapaka* – it is doing nothing. What the government can do best is befooling us – *hamder'ke boka bonay*. Look we do not have any document to show. And, without documents you cannot ask for anything from the government.

The social security schemes do not necessarily compensate fully the losses of the Adivasis – their land, forest, culture, history, and dignity. But, partial compensation is also no less important. The implemented social security schemes—however poorly—were reported to have considerable relevance and usefulness for the Adivasis. In the absence of these schemes, the Adivasis would have encountered the crisis at a much higher degree, especially in terms of food security. It is therefore imperative to remedy the problems involved in the implementation of the social security schemes.



Destined to work for ... : A Kharia woman

6. Gender Relations: Perceptions and Realities

While women in general are subject to various discriminations, there has been a substantial variation in the nature of deprivations among different social groups. The subject of gender equality is a complex issue that involves both private and public spheres of life. However, the issues of inequalities in the private sphere are not unrelated to those in the public sphere. Rather, the failure of public intervention in urgent issues of literacy, healthcare and other basic facilities has perhaps made things more problematic. Gender equality has to be looked at as a larger democratic question. While it needs special attention to improve the status of women in terms of education, health, employment and representation, the issue of equality among different segments of the society cannot be neglected.

6.1 Introduction

The late Dr Payal Tadvi, who allegedly committed suicide on May 22, 2019, was from the Adivasi Tadvi Bhil community, and according to her mother Abeda Tadvi, was “the first woman in our community to pursue post-graduation [in the BYL Nair Hospital, Mumbai] and the first in our family to become a doctor. She was a bright student and had worked hard to reach where she was.” And yet, “[f]or months leading up to her death, she had told her family that she was being harassed by three ‘upper’ caste women doctors.” They allegedly went to the toilet and then wiped their feet on her bed, made casteist slurs against her, made fun of her for being a tribal on WhatsApp groups and threatened not to allow her to enter operation theatres or perform deliveries. A few hours before she took her life, she had reportedly told her mother, once again, about this harassment.¹ There is no copyright protection against identity-based cruelty: If Payal’s death was initiated by her class fellows, the death of

¹ Bhuyan (2019)

Chuni Kotal, on 16 August, 1992, was caused by one of her teachers.² Chuni was pursuing Masters at Vidyasagar University and took her life by hanging herself “due to continuous caste-based harassment and discrimination by one of her Professors.” “Chuni’s death,” commented the acclaimed litterateur-activist, Mahashweta Devi, “has revealed what West Bengal truly is. Brutal caste and class hostility and persecution has [sic] been allowed to continue.”³ Even after nearly three decades of Chuni’s death, the hostility and persecution continues. Not only students but university teachers also are not spared from being at the receiving end of such atrocities: in May 2019, Saraswati Kerketta, a geography teacher of Adivasi background at Rabindra Bharati University, Kolkata “alleged a section of students and staff insulted her by mentioning her background and made her stand for an hour in a classroom despite knowing that she suffers from orthopaedic problems. Later, another professor and two others made similar allegations.”⁴ As it happens, sections of the intelligentsia tried to hide the identity-based oppression and linked it with students’ unruly behaviour towards teachers. Students’ agitations assuming a hoodlum-like form is not new, but what happened with Kerketta has a very clear connection with the way the ruling elites see the Adivasis and other underdogs of society, especially when they are women. Being a woman in any society poses many general disadvantages. “I have nobody of my own – neither my [five] husbands, nor my brothers, nor my father, and, not even you O Lord Madhusudana (*Naiba me pataye santi na putra na bandhva/ na bhratarau na cha pita nayang tu Madhusudana*).” Draupadi’s feelings of being deprived by men so close to her finds in her words a universal expression of anger. Subjugation of women across the globe is a subject well researched and gaining increasing attention. However, in spite of the general applicability of the predicament of women universally, as expressed in Draupadi’s words, the degree of inequality faced by women varies among different individuals, groups or societies – based largely on classes.

India, a country with a historically complex variety of sub-societies—ethnic, cultural, religious, social, economic and linguistic, to mention a few—is a land where the status of women varies across societies. Compare the predicament of *Kunti*, mother of the Pandavas, with that of the Adivasi woman who, along with her five children, was burnt alive while sleeping at the *jatugriha* (the house made of wax). Kunti was unlucky to be stripped of her title of queen; she was made to wander the forests with no security, food, or shelter. Yet, she and her children managed to stay alive at the cost of the Adivasi mother who had to sacrifice her

2 <https://thedeathofmeritinindia.wordpress.com/2011/05/07/chuni-kotal-vidyasagar-university-and-an-anthropologists-suicide/>, accessed on 01.07. 2019

3 Ibid

4 The Hindustan Times (2019)

life and the lives of her five children to save the Pandavas.

One may also look at a narrative from the 16th century Bangla story-poem, the *Chandi Mangal Kavya* by Mukundaram Chakraborty. Khullana, the second of the two wives of the trader Dhanapati, was a victim of a coercive system in which men treated women as mere property. In this particular case, polygamy was primarily responsible for her sufferings. Khullana was driven out by the co-wife Lahana, and then forced to tend goats and live in a hut. For Khullana, it was a sudden catastrophe that she had not anticipated; her suffering was immense. But the same verse presents before us another woman, Fullara. Fullara, wife of Kalketu, sold meat of animals hunted by her husband. To her, life was an incessant struggle for food. As she simply said: “When men and women are readying themselves for sexual pleasure, I am suffering from the harshest pain of hunger.”

In today’s world too, the issue of gender differences cannot but be seen in isolation from other inequalities. As Amartya Sen insightfully points out, “Gender is certainly an additional contributor to social inequality, but it does not act independently of class ... It is the interactive presence of these two features of deprivation – being low class and being female – that can massively impoverish women from the less privileged classes.”⁵

The complex social context, therefore, makes it crucially important to examine the case of gender inequality in a comprehensive manner – both in its wholeness and particularities. This cannot be otherwise in the discussion of gender relations among the Adivasis. The relationship is not static. It cannot be, for states and dominant societies today have left very little space for the Adivasis to develop themselves independently. The intermingling of class and ethnicity have created for the Adivasis a situation where even Adivasis, inter alia other oppressed groups who have made relative progress in achieving some of the capability-enhancing opportunities, especially in the field of education, employment and politics, are not spared from being humiliated, discriminated against and even tortured to death. And, women among them are considered much easier prey, since they are doubly disadvantaged – first being Adivasis and then being women. Public policies and larger socio-economic changes have had their influence on the Adivasi societies. As the historian Debasree De points out, “It is true that women were hardly positioned as equals in traditional Adivasi societies. However, earlier they had formed an important cog in the traditional gender division of labour inside as well as outside the household. Under the colonial-capitalist regime, they were pushed to the margin of resultant political economy.”⁶ For example,

5 Sen (2005)

6 De (2018), p264

as a study found, “With erosion of traditional livelihood and few local options available, Santals have been forced to enter the labour market as migrants. Faced with a negative impact on schooling and health care, poor living and working conditions, and constant fear of sexual abuse, the entry into the labour market of Santal women in particular is nothing but a survival strategy since staying at home could mean starvation.”⁷ As our study indicates, it’s not just the case of the Santals, but applies in varying degrees to many other Adivasi groups in Eastern India. The following sections will make an attempt to look at the gender dynamics among the Adivasis in the light of the changed political-economic situation, described at some length in the previous chapters.

6.2 From Political-Economic Subjugation to Cultural Aggression

There is an emerging trend of giving way to the henceforth absent son-preference among, at least, some sections of the Adivasis (we will return to this presently). The phenomenon of son-preference emerging among the Adivasis cannot be seen in isolation; rather, the root of the phenomenon must be traced in the influence of political-economic relationship between the Adivasis and the dominant power. It is true that like other societies, the presence of gender-based differences in opportunities to flourish as human beings is also found among the Adivasis. “Of all creatures that have life and will, we women are the most wretched,” as vivified in Euripides’ *Medea*, found an echo among many of the Adivasi women we have been able to interact with. “The world’s historical defeat of the female sex,” which was followed by man’s taking “command in the home,” has also influenced the Adivasi societies to varying degrees: “The woman was degraded and reduced to servitude, she became the slave of his lust and a mere instrument for the production of children.”⁸ In the description of a Kharia woman of Jalpaiguri district:

Amader ghare jwala, bahire jwala – we are distressed both at home and outside”, was a common expression of many of the women participants of the present study. “I get up at cock crow, sweep the house, clean the utensils, fetch water, cook, and go out to work [agricultural and other wage labour, or collecting forest produces, etc.]. The same is repeated again in the afternoon, when I come back from work. Even when I am at home I am engaged in various works like making leaf plates, or mats, or brooms. Hardly do we women sit idle. But, men are different. They are men, and find time for enjoyment. Fate has thrust upon us to work round the clock.

The fate-based view of looking at the self vis-a-vis male supremacy was found

⁷ See Rao and Rana (1997²).

⁸ *Engels* (1884)

to be a common belief. Yet, to eliminate girl children, or neglect them so as to get them eliminated from society, or not allowing them to be born – commonly found discriminations in vast parts of non-Adivasi India – had not until recently made an inroad into Adivasi societies. This non-discrimination followed in child survival has its roots in the Adivasi world view, which, despite attributing women a low status, never imagined them as disposable objects. Nevertheless, the political-economic aggression of the non-Adivasi world, beginning mainly during the colonial regime but continuing to expand through the post-colonial, has also given way to a hugely negative cultural change, of different degrees in different Adivasi societies. This seems to have instilled among the Adivasis a sense of inferiority. Perhaps a sense of helplessness against the aggressors has made a part of them believe in the invincibility of the ruling “others” and taking their rule and customs, culture and beliefs as God-given. Adivasis across the world are at the receiving end of multiple oppression and violence, and the worst sufferers of the violence are women. As per the International Indigenous Women’s Forum’s observations:

For indigenous women, gender based violence is shaped not only by gender discrimination within indigenous and non-indigenous arenas but also by a context of ongoing colonization, militarism, racism and social exclusion; and poverty-inducing economic and development policies.⁹

6.3 Work, Work, and Work: At Home and Outside

From the ancient days of magic and taboo, ‘work’ has been a major divisive element at the levels of both perception and practice. Man has often reserved the right to decide what the woman should and should not do. The subjugation of women by men essentially lies in the codification of the social laws that define – often strictly – the “works” to be carried out, and to be abstained from being done, by women. It is the particularisation of work that excludes most of the Adivasi women from the control of the productive forces (as land), through the imposition of prohibition on certain kind of work (as ploughing). Notwithstanding their major contributory role in the household economy, women’s work often remains unrecognised, both at the family and societal levels, which is reflected in the undermining of women’s work in the Census data, by defining work as something that yields some or the other form of economic return. This results in lesser degree of work participation in Census data even for the Adivasi women. As per Census 2011, the all-India worker-population ratio (WPR) for the Adivasi women was 44 percent against 54 percent for their

9 FIMI (2006)

men. In West Bengal it was even less favourable for the Adivasi women (39%) as against the men (56%). However, the corresponding ratios for the entire population were 26 and 53 percent at the all-India level and 18 and 57 percent at the state level respectively. Although there has been some improvement in the female work participation rate in India in the decades since Independence, while the male work participation rate remained more or less static, the difference between men and women with regard to the worker-population ratio is still very high. The difference is not only numerical but also rather qualitative. While the focus of men's engagement has been on the switch to 'other' work, 65 percent of the female workers are still tied down to agriculture in 2011. Among the Adivasi women the proportion was much higher than that of the combined figure for all social groups – 83 percent Adivasi female workers in India were found engaged in agricultural activities in 2011.

There has been a change in the trends of female work participation in West Bengal. When at the all-India level the proportion of other workers among the main workers has increased by 17 percentage points between 1991 and 2011 (17.7 in 1991 to 34.4 in 2011), in West Bengal the improvement in this figure has been remarkable. It has risen by 20 percentage points (from 34.6 in 1991 to 54.1 in 2011) in West Bengal. This change has actually been the result of diversification of work opportunities. There has been a major switch from agricultural sector to other work. While at the all-India level the proportion of the women main workers as agricultural labourers, in 2011, is nearly 35 percent, it is only 23 percent in West Bengal. The reduction in the proportion of women workers as agricultural labourers in West Bengal has been higher (from 38 percent in 1991 to 23 percent in 2011) than the all-India rate (from 44 percent in 1991 to 35 percent in 2011). However, this switch from agricultural work to other work has not seemingly had a uniform impact on women as a whole. Women from socially disadvantaged communities, who have much less access to the social opportunities like education and health, are mainly engaged as agricultural labourers. While the proportion of the main agricultural labourer was 23 percent for all social groups in West Bengal, it was 56 percent for the Adivasi females.¹⁰

In general, the work participation rate among Adivasi women is much higher

10 Female agricultural labourers (main and marginal together) constitute 27 percent of the total agricultural labourers in West Bengal. Again, the Dalit and Adivasi female agricultural labourers constitute nearly two thirds of the total female agricultural labourers. This is in complete disagreement with the composition of the population of the state. Dalits and Adivasis constitute about 29 percent of the total population of West Bengal (SC 23 %, and ST 6 %). In fact, Dalit and Adivasi female agricultural labourers constitute more than 17 percent of the total agricultural labourers in West Bengal in 2011.

than that of the state average.¹¹ But this position has been achieved only at the cost of the Adivasi women working in the more labour-intensive fields. The greater scope of diversification of work has not benefited the Adivasi women to any significant level; rather, it has added to the worsening of their position. Despite having a much higher work participation rate than their non-Adivasi counterparts, Adivasi women are largely confined to lowly paid manual works – despite some inter-community variations (see Table 6.1 and Table A.6.2 in Appendix III).

Table 6.1. Distribution of Adivasi female workers in West Bengal by their primary occupation (in percent)

Occupations	Male	Female	All
Agri labour	15.5 (207)	29.6 (308)	21.7 (515)
Non-agri labour	29.6 (396)	9.4 (98)	20.8 (494)
Plantation Work (all type)	9.7 (130)	16.0 (166)	12.5 (296)
Cultivator (all type)	28.3 (379)	24.4 (253)	26.6 (632)
Crafts (Household Industry)	1.3 (18)	3.5 (36)	2.3 (54)
Independent Professionals (Private tutor, etc)	0.4 (6)	0.4 (4)	0.4 (10)
Regular wage or salaried employee	6.7 (90)	3.4 (35)	5.3 (125)
Self-Employment other than cultivation-crafts	5.2 (69)	3.2 (33)	4.3 (102)
Gathering Forest Produces (all type)	2.1 (28)	7.0 (73)	4.3 (101)
Stone collection or Fishing	0.5 (7)	1.9 (20)	1.1 (27)
Other	0.5 (7)	1.3 (13)	0.8 (20)
Total	100.0 (1337)	100.0 (1039)	100.0 (2376)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

The pattern of female work participation found by the study clearly indicates that, in tandem with the larger social framework, the Adivasi women, who are also much less privileged in terms of education and health, form the majority of the female manual workers. As a general trend, a higher rate of work participation is inversely proportionate to the literacy rate. Again, a higher work participation rate denotes a lower extent of availability of work: in a population with an above normal work participation rate, the proportion of marginal workers (who are in gainful employment for less than six months) increases. According to Census 2011, the proportion of marginal workers among the Adivasi females was 56 percent in West Bengal. Also, a higher rate of work participation, especially among women, is generally related with low-paid categories of work, mainly in

11 As per our survey, the WPR for the Adivasi females was 46 percent (see Table A.6.1 in Appendix III).

the agricultural sector. The general pattern was reinforced by our field data – 54 percent of the women reportedly worked in the agriculture sector. They were also engaged in plantation (16%), non-agricultural labour hiring (nine percent), and collection of forest produces (seven percent) – all low paid works. Their predicaments as wage labourers and other manual workers are characterised by low wages, and atrocities by employers, money-lenders and government officials.¹²

The nature of their work adds not only to their physical distress but also to their physical and mental safety: they are often subjected to sexual abuse in the work fields. As a Santal woman of Jhargram told us:

We are not afraid of work. We are born hard-working. But we complain about our fate that we do not have enough land to sustain. So, we are forced to work for others – sometime in the lands, sometime in the construction sites or the stone quarries. And, you know, most of the dikumen are very bad. Our mere appearance makes their mouth water. Since we are poor, they take us for granted; they think they can do with us whatever they want to do...Some time they even force some women into bad things. They threat to oust us from work, they terrify us with their power to lodge false complaints with police against us, they tell us, they would not



A life traditional

12 Rao (2002)

loan us money. And, you know, we are always in distress, we often need money to buy food, to pay the doctor, or for other necessities...Many of us resist. But, how can we escape there ogling? How can we evade their abusive remarks in every encounter – at the market, at the work site, at the ration shop, or on the road? We have not done any wrong to them or to their children. Then why do they blot our attire [play with our dignity]?

Another aspect of perceived degradation of dignity was linked to changing work patterns. There has been a growing demand for women domestic help in the non-tribal households around the localities as well as in various towns. The trait of self-esteem the Adivasis traditionally inherit goes, in many cases, contrary to the kind of work demanded of them as domestic help (cleaning utensils of non-Adivasis for example). Yet, owing to economic vulnerability many of the young women are reduced to accept the 'offer' of such employment. Despite accepting the work, many of the women were found to be encountering a contradiction in their psyche. Let us take the case of Fulmoni Tudu of a Jhargram village, who works as a paid domestic help in a well-to-do non-Adivasi household in the town – she commutes from her village daily.

"We are poor, and often go to bed hungry. So, I come here to work. I get the food. I get some money, which is a big support to our family. But tell me who likes this? My foremothers had never done this kind of work – cleaning the utensils after the dikus had eaten. What a shame! Gradually, I tell you the truth, we are degrading ourselves as human beings. I wish I could live in my village, where I would be happy empty stomach. May be it is our greed for money, and greed for food that has pushed us to sacrifice our dignity."

She was ashamed of her losing dignity. Ironically, she blames herself for something that has been thrust upon her and doesn't emerge out of her conscious choices or decisions.

Messing with their dignity, as we have discussed above, does not only happen to poor women; even those who could manage to make some advancement in the field of education and other public spheres are not spared and find themselves at the receiving end of various assaults. But, as a Limbu woman of Darjeeling told us, "It happens because we are numerically small. Let alone women, you will need a microscope to find men in well paid government or private jobs, the political arena or other spheres that matter. If many of us could go to colleges and universities, they would not have dared to do any wrong."

6.4 Opportunity Deprivation

Adivasi women acquiring education may not be a one-off solution to the problem but it certainly can play a crucially important role in adding to their voice and resistance. However, as we have discussed at length, the general deprivations of opportunities for acquiring education by the Adivasis have a particularly inflicting bearing upon the women in those societies: when, according to 2011 Census, more than half of the Adivasi women are illiterate (in India and West Bengal the illiteracy rates are 51.6%, 52.3% respectively), and among some groups the rates are abysmally low, it is hard to dream of their significant representation in the larger public sphere. Without improving this deplorable rate of literacy and opening up of further opportunities for Adivasi women to participate in higher levels of education, which we have discussed at length in Chapter 2, it is impossible to change their 'fate.' Doing this requires a radical change in mindsets. The low rate of literacy and other blockages of opportunity are related not only to lack of infrastructure and other provisions in the delivery of education but are also inseparably connected with the social fabric where the traditionally deprived are not acknowledged as having any right to self-assertion. We can take a clue from Nalini Bera's award winning novel *Savar Charit*, which, while describing a Lodha girl's receiving grossly inhuman treatment from her teacher, makes us look into a terrifying social mirror:

Punai had only one frock, and it was so torn that it could barely cover her tiny, just developing bosoms. Through the wide hole under the arm of the frock the teacher poked the stick, which wriggled around her upper body...With eyes closed and the stick in hand the teacher jibed at her: 'It's the school, not the forest where you pluck the mahua flowers and fruits. You cannot come here wearing a rag like this.' He supplemented his verbal deride by dragging the stick through the hole to tear the frock apart...She found herself pillaged. Wetting her pants under the torn frock warm streams flew down her legs."¹³

The same socio-economic and political construct has created a condition where the generally poor provisioning of the publicly delivered health facilities for the Adivasis have a highly damaging effect on the women of those societies (discussed in Chapter 3). While illiteracy is a major ill that severely blights the chances of women acquiring an equal status with the men, the condition of women's health is an area for equal or even greater concern. The weaker health status of women not only affects the prospect of women but also of the men as the health of the children irrespective of their gender depends heavily upon

13 Bera (2005)

the mother's health. This is reflected in the high infant and child mortality rates and also in children's lower health status (high rate of anaemia, low weight, height, etc.). In line with the relationship of socio-economic conditions and other development indices, the status of Adivasi women's health also greatly varies from the 'other' women. They suffer most from anaemia, lower body mass index, low weight, and so on. Again, they find it hard to receive medical treatment when it is most required.

6.5 Perception and Reality: Women's Status in Adivasi Societies

Often, the Adivasi communities are held responsible for their women's lower socio-economic achievement. At one level, it is said that Adivasis are indifferent to their children's - especially girls' - education or are averse to receiving modern medical treatment. The falsity of such claims is more than evident: the lack of opportunity and public provisioning are the root cause of the Adivasi women—along with men—lagging behind in terms of social advancements (discussed in Chapters 2 and 3). On the other level, there is a trend in the academia to relate women's issues among the Adivasis with that of some norms established and governed by customary institutions which do not allow women in most Adivasi societies equal status in terms of certain rights, such as land inheritance, participation in public affairs or certain religious functions. Again, there is a much romanticised view that sees the Adivasi societies through a lens that fails to recognise the intra-social inequalities.

Our findings suggest a line that requires a more complex understanding of gender relations among the Adivasis. While the general lacks in public policy resulting in poor implementation of the public programmes have made the Adivasi women especially subject to deprivations, the role of customs and institutions that have historically been constructed with elements of bias against women cannot be undermined. Most Adivasi societies are also male dominated and therefore the women suffer from a double predicament: deprivations and injustices inside and outside their households. In most Adivasi societies, women are not allowed to inherit landed property.¹⁴ Polygamy and consequent destitution of women are not rare phenomena in their societies. Witch-hunting, which has close relations with the scramble for landed property,¹⁵ is also not a rarity. But, all these have a closer relationship with colonial rule, which had had a devastating impact on the Adivasis in so far as it widened the intra-society gender inequalities. The land policy has reduced a self-sufficient economy into a wage-labour-based survival. The Adivasi *cultivator* became a migrant agricultural labourer or a displaced tea-

14 Rao and Rana (1997¹); Rao (2002)

15 Nathan, Kelkar and Xiaogang (1998)

garden worker,¹⁶ the worst affected of the process of which, as discussed above, are the women, the majority of whom “get up at cock crow and go to bed much after the fall of darkness, and in-between do not get a moment to rest their back on the earth.”

The context has further worsened because of state inaction towards implementing the constitutionally guaranteed safeguards against atrocities and injustice upon Adivasi women. Instead, often, the police, forest officials, as told by the women, “avariciously find occasions to harass us.” Frequently, the police allegedly act against the very Adivasi women who approached the police station seeking justice.

Inside their society, Adivasi women enjoy relative freedom. They enjoy this through the historically evolved norms of doing most of the things collectively at the society level and jointly by men and women together at the household level. The norms have a mutually interactive relationship with women’s greater degree of financial independence – much of their livelihood is self-supported. The freedoms include going out, taking some family decisions, marrying and re-marrying, divorce, etc. As our study found, for many of the outside activities a substantial section of the Adivasi women enjoy considerable independence (with no permission from other, especially male, members needed). These are

Table 6.2. Whose permission did Adivasi women need in their daily outside activities (N = 888)

Permission needed for	Permission needed from (in percent)					
	Male heading the HH or eldest of all members	Female heading the HH or eldest of all members	No permission needed	Not allowed	Usually not going/doing	Others
Shopping for daily needs	45.2	6.8	41.0	4.2	0.9	2.0
Going out for earning	49.2	5.5	37.6	2.9	1.6	3.1
Visiting relatives	70.3	7.3	19.3	0.8	0.0	2.4
Visiting friends	58.1	5.9	29.4	4.2	0.1	2.4
Going to weekly market / local fair	57.1	6.6	29.7	3.6	0.7	2.3
Participating in social activities	60.2	5.9	26.1	4.5	1.2	2.0
Participating in political activities	49.9	4.1	10.6	26.5	5.0	4.0
Going to panchayat/government offices	56.3	5.1	18.6	13.9	3.3	2.8

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

16 Bradley Birt (1909), Coomer (1987), Dalton (1872), Datta (1940), Datta (1981 reprint), Hembrom (2003), Hunter (1996), Kabiraj (2001), Mcalpin (1909) and O’Malley (1910)

very high in buying daily needs (41%), going out for earning (38%), visiting friends (29%), or going to the *haat* (weekly market) or *mela* (local fair) (30%). On the other hand, on matters of politics or governmental affairs women reportedly enjoyed lesser degree of independence. Indeed, a considerable section of them reported that they were not allowed to take part in political activities (27%), and Panchayat government office related matters (14%). The inter-community variations in these matters were, however, found to be nominal.

In terms of taking family level decisions the Adivasi value system was found to be rather thriving: In nearly half of the households most major decisions were taken jointly by husband and wife; even in some vital decision like education of children women in a significant section of households (12%) had reported to have taken the decision independently.

Table 6.3. Nature of decision making in Adivasi households (N=888)

Decisions			Taken by (in percent)				
			Male heading the HH or eldest of all members alone	Female heading the HH or eldest of all members or wife of the male member heading the household alone	Female other than head of the HH or eldest of all females or wife of male member heading the household alone	Not relevant for concerned decisions	Others
Land or property related	26.7	42.0	21.4	6.9	0.5	0.9	1.7
Education of children	9.9	60.5	10.9	10.6	1.8	1.0	6.0
Purchasing consumer goods	19.4	46.5	17.1	14.3	1.7	0.0	1.0
Expenditure for social occasions	20.7	49.1	17.5	10.7	1.1	0.0	0.9
Cooking	3.8	15.9	2.7	64.5	11.7	0.0	1.4
Illness of household head's wife	15.5	30.5	33.7	3.3	0.3	15.0	1.7
Birth of children	3.9	70.8	7.3	8.6	4.2	0.5	4.7

Source: Primary Survey, 2018

* In some cases, spouses were not the head of the household.

Important as it is to note the relatively greater freedom of household decision making that Adivasi women enjoy, it is equally important to note the *unfreedom* in certain other areas. Women, in general, do not have inheritance rights (although there are exceptions)¹⁷, and the practice of cultivation of own—or leased in—lands has been so designed as to supplement the customary law of disallowing women land rights. Aside from this, our study found a restriction of women's choice in taking the decisions on a most personal matter: healthcare. In matters of treatment of illness of a household head's wife, the extent of women taking the decision was found to be as meagre as four percent – as opposed to men taking this decision in 34 percent cases; following of the normal practice of taking decisions jointly by husband and wife was also found to be reduced (31%). This has a clear link with the availability and functioning of the publicly delivered health facilities. But, when it comes to seeking treatment of any household member most of the women cannot visit the healthcare centres on their own, and hence the decision about seeing a healthcare provider is taken by men. The slack in the general pattern has much to do with the non-availability and poor functionality of health services than that with the social customs, important as they are. Many of the women told us that had there been a functional healthcare centre within accessible distance and had they received good treatment they would have taken the decision to visit on their own.

It is possible to enhance the extent of women's independent or collective decision making in health and other matters (education, employment, and so on) by expanding the public services with greater effectiveness. Important in itself, the demand for enhanced public services in general and health services in particular gains further strength from a new apparently cultural but essentially political-economic intrusion among the Adivasis: changes in female-male ratio among the children under six. Let us discuss this at some length.

6.6 Changing Female Male Ratio

The ratio of female to male (FMR) in a population is a good indicator of measuring gender inequality because it indicates inequalities in terms of healthcare and nutrition faced by the women versus the men. In spite of the fact that female children possess a greater probability to survive, disparities in healthcare and nutritional support reverse this indicator. Throughout the world, more males are born than females. However, provided that there is no inequality between the new-born of either sex, female children can compensate by the greater ability to survive once born. Thus, there are more females than males in developed countries, such as in Europe and North America (1050 females per 1000 males).¹⁸

17 Rana (2014) Pp.183:206.

18 Sen A, Ibid

India, as an entire nation, has poor FMR, meaning there are many more males than females born and living in India. However, the FMR in Kerala (a southern state in India) is not only much closer to gender parity as compared to what the Indian average is but also surpasses many other developed countries in this respect. On the other hand, the growing inequalities in many other Indian states have actually caused a reverse trend in the FMR. In some states such as Bihar, this ratio has been declining drastically.¹⁹ There is a growing trend of the son-preference being percolated down from the upper caste Hindus to the henceforth gender-egalitarian at birth lower castes of the northern Indian states.²⁰ Difference in FMR is not just spatially determined, it is also socially determined with clear differences in this respect among social groups; what is particularly striking is the traditional value system of non-discrimination between boys and girls among the Adivasis. The FMR among the Adivasis, as recorded by the Census of India 2011, is much higher in West Bengal and India (999 and 990 respectively, for all age groups and 974 and 957 for children under six) than among the total population (950 and 943 respectively for all age groups and 956 and 919 for children under six). As per our survey, the FMR for all age groups as a group (1020) and for the children under six years of age (1035) were substantially high. The difference between the FMR among Adivasis and all population clearly indicates a much lower female population than the male among other societies.

Table 6.4. Female Male Ratio (FMR) among Adivasis and All: West Bengal and India

	FMR (All)				FMR (Children under 6)			
Year	ST (WB)	All (WB)	ST (India)	All (India)	ST (WB)	All (WB)	ST (India)	All (India)
1991	964	917	972	931	983	969	985	948
2001	982	934	977	938	981	960	973	927
2011	999	950	990	943	974	956	957	919

Source: Census of India, various years

Nevertheless, changes in FMR among the Adivasis over the decades show a lamentably growing influence of the so-called mainstream societies. During our fieldwork we have witnessed a change in traditional egalitarian values, especially

19 In 1901, 11 Indian states had more than 1000 females per 1000 males. In 2001, only Kerala and the Union Territory of Pondicherry have similar figures. Such declines in the FMR in some states, in conjunction with poor record keeping in states such as Punjab and Haryana since the beginning of the century, have severely damaged the nation's statistics. The all-India figures were 972:1000 in 1901 and 933:1000 in 2001. West Bengal had 945:1000 in 1901, which drastically fell in the middle of the century before it rose to 934 (one point ahead of the national average) in 2001.

20 Dreze and Murthi (2001); Agnihotri (2000)

related to children, among Adivasi households. In the assessment of Dhanu Kora of Hugli, “We have three daughters. But we need a son. Without a son parents will go to the hell.” Similar ‘aspirations’ were echoed in some other households too. The growing son-preference, which the Adivasis have been made to borrow from the socio-economically influential non-Adivasis, is also reflected in the Census data. Although there has been an improvement in the FMR of the total population, figures concerning the children under six are worryingly declining. The FMR among children under six in West Bengal has come down from 983 to 974 in three decades (1991-2011). Similarly, the corresponding all-India figures have come down from 948 to 919 in the same period. (see Table 6.4). A low FMR among the children will have its reflection in the future adult population, and, if not checked now, the present improvement may come to a halt in the subsequent census enumerations.

**Table 6.5. Female male Ratio (FMR) among the Adivasi groups selected for the study:
All population and children under six**

Community	FMR (All)	FMR (Children under 6)
Bedia, Bediya	973	984
Bhumij	980	969
Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan	1002	936
Kisan	934	962
Kora	1000	980
Lepcha	981	911
Lodha, Kheria, Kharia	988	982
Mahali	1003	995
Mech	978	896
Munda	990	976
Rabha	952	937
Santal	1012	979
Savar	1012	1014
Limbu (Subba)	1011	936
Tamang	1014	964
Oraon	993	970
All Schedule Tribes	999	974

Source: Census of India, 2011

Again, some substantial inter-group variations appear among the Adivasis, and in some cases, especially among the Adivasis of the Himalayas, the FMR

among children under six is disturbingly low.²¹ Despite Adivasi women having a lower status as regards civic, religious, political, and inheritance rights than that of men, the traditionally set up norms in the Adivasi societies rendered their survival equality mandatory; but the historically constructed societal norm, as the trends show, may face a serious challenge in the near future. “It is the desire for upward mobility in the era of renewed primary accumulation, combined with the oppressive market for labour and the absence of decent state-mediated social security, that make the home and the womb such increasingly violent places,” notes Barbara Harris-White.²² Her observation about Indian women in general has particular bearing on the Adivasi women. In the “era of primary accumulation” the menace of son-preference seems to have appeared as a ‘brand new’ addition to the ever-increasing oppression and violence against Adivasi women.

6.7 Conclusion

The question of gender equality has to be seen as a larger democratic question. While it needs special attention to improve the status of women in terms of education, health, employment, and representation, the issue of equality among different segments of the society cannot be neglected. Having said that, it has to be seen in association with the larger socio-economic vulnerabilities Adivasis have been facing. Eviction from land, forcibly converted to a pool of cheap wage labour, denial of basic opportunities and relentless cultural aggression by the dominant societies have been acting together—with certain degree of success—to make the Adivasis accepting of the supremacy of the ‘mainstream.’ This has given way to the erosion of the historically evolved rich moral and cultural values among the Adivasis, the first and major casualty of which are the women, and the declining female-male ratio among the children under six can be seen as one of its manifestations. The other manifestations include beating women, punishing them for untoward eventualities (death from undetected disease), mixing with men of “other” societies, restricting their choice, and so on. In a different context, the film critique Chidananda Dasgupta wrote how social frustration often gets relief by making the women their targets:

Over the last three decades, the romantic view of woman [in popular cinema] has given way to an assertion of male machismo, tending towards physical dominance and rough handling of women. It is possible to relate this to the growing harassment of women in real life, apart from dowry deaths, extending to molestation on the streets and in public transport. For young women, particularly the educated and modern ones, it has

21 As the sample size for children under six years was too small for most of the studied groups, the inter group variation may not bear much relevance.

22 Harris-White (2009)

become more dangerous to be alone in many areas of the country. The root of this phenomenon may lie in frustration, as the sexual fantasies young men see on the screen cannot be realized in real life.²³

Adivasi women, thus, find themselves under a double-edged sword – one side of which comes from within the society and the other—even sharper—flank comes from the state and dominant society. Coming to terms with the context may require a pluralistic movement with the Adivasi women playing an agentic role, instances of which are coming up in succession.²⁴

The analytical framework of the understanding of the question of gender equality among the Adivasis cannot but travel a complex route. It needs special policy attention to improve the status of women by expanding the opportunities of education, health, employment, and representation in the larger public sphere, which in turn can build the women's own agency to assert their societal rights – to inherit, to participate in social matters, and to participate with equal assertion in every household matter. At the same time, it has to be made imperative for public policy to offer the fullest of protection to the Adivasi women from atrocities and injustices that have become part of their daily lives. Positive freedoms with the ability to do something do not come automatically; they are, in many ways, contingent to negative freedoms – of not being subjected to atrocities, violence, and inhumanity. Similarly, negative freedoms are also heavily reliant upon the expansion of positive freedoms.



Slow move to technology: A Kora woman machine sewing leaf plates

23 Dasgupta (1991), p158

24 Rana (2014), *ibid*; Sharma (2018)

7. Lessons for Action

In popular discourse, the socio-economic disadvantages of the Adivasis as compared with the rest of the population are often seen through a lens of 'benevolence.' The views concerning the 'underdevelopment' of the Adivasis typically take the route of seeing this section of the population as the 'takers / receivers' of governmental benefits. Policies and practices rooted in this approach, in most cases, fail to accommodate the question of the Adivasis' participation in the ongoing processes of the nation as co-citizens. This in turn not only deprives the Adivasis from the socio-economic progresses they are capable of making but also causes a much larger deprivation for the entire nation. To wit, the rich moral, cultural, and social values and linguistic and other practice-acquired developments that the Adivasis have been nurturing through history could have contributed immensely to the flourishing and strengthening of our democracy. Mutual co-operation, wider participation with an egalitarian approach, decision making through discussion, peaceful co-habitation with other beings as well as with and within nature, age old practices of environmental protection, and many such highly civic qualities could add to the country's democratic curriculum in a much bigger and useful way. But, the politics of dominance, economics of immediate gain, and social outlook of separateness has charted out for the Adivasis as well as others, a very different path.

The general deprivations seem to be linked not only with poor implementation of the programmes concerning the Adivasis, but also with the very framing of policies that are often oblivious to the complex constitution of the Adivasi world. As at the national level, Adivasis in West Bengal are of diverse socio-cultural, linguistic, and geographical backgrounds. Variations in socio-economic status of the Adivasis are even more striking: the broad spatial (inter-district) differences are further complicated by inter-group and intra-group variations. For example, the literacy rate of all Adivasis in the state is 58 percent (one

percentage point less than the all-India average), but the inter-district figures range between 44 percent (Uttar Dinajpur) and 82 percent (Kolkata). Similarly, the inter-community literacy rates vary between 32 percent (Gorait) and 88 percent (Magh). Again, for the same group (for example, Santals) there are considerable spatial differences. In the same line, while 49 percent of all Adivasis (main workers) depend upon agricultural wage work for livelihood, the community wise figures vary between five percent (Tamang) and 70 percent (Khond); in case of cultivation as the main occupation the lowest and highest range between two communities vary between one percent (Magh) and 43 percent (Lepcha), the average being 15 percent. In addition to spatial, inter-community, and intra-community variations there are huge differences between genders.

It seems that there exists—both in public and academic domains—a wide gap in knowledge about this selectively forgotten and pragmatically remembered population of the country. Who they are, where they live, what they do, what their socio-economic status is, what their cultural and linguistic practices are, are questions to which the prevailing answers are largely fragmented and vague. For example, in West Bengal, there are 40 Adivasi groups notified by the government as Scheduled Tribes (STs), but most people use the terms Adivasi and Santal interchangeably, while the latter, in fact, is but one of the 40 notified tribes, forming 47 percent of the total ST population. Despite the wide ranging socio-economic variations between the different Adivasi groups and within the individual Adivasi communities being reflected in the Census data, they have hardly found any attention either in public policy or in general discussions.

This report recognises that the Adivasis' right to a life of dignity will entail at once a social recognition of their valued cultural rights as well as a social commitment to ensure their access to basic social opportunities essential for their core capability empowerment. Correspondingly, this report remains watchful, on the one hand, of some of the visible trends towards a coercive homogenisation of their cultural distinctiveness in the name of 'development' and on the other hand it attempts to express constructive impatience with the widespread social neglect and injustice that exists in many parts of the country causing deprivations to the basic capabilities of the Adivasis. This report acknowledges the appeal of the twin claims of 'politics of recognition' and 'politics of justice'.

In this connection, it also looks at the role of the state through a critical lens: it seeks to focus on the areas of human development – for example, on public provisioning of basic education and universal healthcare and social policies essential to ensure livelihood and food and nutritional security. Disappointingly, these are the areas in which the state often remains 'under-active'. The report

also suggests that the state sometimes becomes ‘hyper-active’ in rewarding private interests at the cost of public welfare through its extractive role as far as tribal lands and various forest resources are concerned. The ‘hands-on’ and ‘hands-off’ functions of the state, therefore, have to be examined critically for a rounded analysis of Adivasi rights in our democratic polity. We present here some of the preliminary findings of the report to draw as much as possible from the deliberations expected of experts as well as general public following the publication of the report.

Accusation and Under-Achievements

The study finds a major contrast between the views of policy makers and implementers at different levels and the Adivasis we have interacted with during fieldwork. Most of the makers and implementers of social policies, including politicians, government officials, school teachers, medical professionals (both trained doctors and unrecognised practitioners), health workers, and even social activists tended to see the socio-economic under-achievements of Adivasis as a result of the latter’s cultural insularity and indifference to participating in the larger social processes. However, our field level communications reveal that notwithstanding maintaining and often struggling to maintain the rich cultural distinctions, Adivasis belonging to various communities were keen to share a common platform of socio-economic achievements. A clear reflection of the inclination towards ensured inclusiveness is the increased level of school enrolment and it follows the general pattern of the country – children of weaker financial background tended to be enrolled in government schools while their relatively solvent counterparts were inclined to choose private ones (more on this presently). Of a total 661 children in the age group of six to 14 years, 94 percent were found to be in school. Of the 41 children in the said age group, nine (one percent) were found to be never enrolled, and 32 (five percent) were reported to have dropped out. That despite several initiatives to universalise elementary education some children among the Adivasis are still out of school is lamentable, and yet, one cannot miss noting the advancements made over time. Similarly, as regards medical care, in more than 95 percent cases patients sought treatment from persons or facilities practicing modern medicines (we are not going into the debate of the traditional versus the modern conflict – the point to note here is the unfounded basis of the constructed notion of the Adivasis’ refusal to partake in the larger social processes). Aspirations for improved life can also be seen from the data related to child delivery: of 61 deliveries in the year preceding the survey only seven took place at home (in two cases with the help of a trained *dai*).

Capability Constraints

In contrast, the lower level of socio-economic achievements of Adivasis were found to be linked more with the gaps in state and other social initiatives to meet the aspirations of the Adivasis to enhance their capabilities by participating in social processes. The state's responsibility to correct historical wrongdoings—shattering Adivasi life by alienating them from their land, livelihood, social settings, and cultural heritage—and make positively discriminatory arrangements to expand their choices, as understood from the field research, has not found its due in policy framing and implementation.

For example, seven percent of the respondents said that their children had to walk more than one kilometer to attend primary school (this was at variance with the Right to Education Act 2009 which mandated that the primary school should be within one kilometer of the child's home). Compounded with other, more complicated problems such as lack of teachers in Adivasi areas, teachers' absenteeism and their uncaring attitude towards Adivasi children, the huge problem of comprehension owing to the difference in mother tongue and the medium of education, and so on, the very problem of access to schools created barriers for the Adivasi children in general, and girls among them in particular, that appeared almost insurmountable and resulted, at least partially, in the rate of transition. While only 41 children were found to be out of school at the elementary level, the number shot up to 293 at higher levels. Deprivation in terms of quality education was reflected in other fields including health, employment, utilisation of public services, and political participation.

Similarly, a huge gap appeared in the health sector in publicly delivered services. Of the 53 children above 12 months of age found in the survey, the household respondents could provide immunisation cards for only 36 (68%). While some said that they had misplaced the card, some could not even remember whether they were at all provided with one. Whatever may the case be, a higher degree of non-availability of immunisation cards (32%) indicates the weaknesses in the delivery of immunisation. This was further corroborated by the fact that even a substantial number of children whose immunisation cards were available were not fully immunised: of the 36 children only 21 (58%) were, as recorded in the cards, found to be fully immunised. As regards public health facilities, nearly half of the households reported open defecation as 44 percent of them did not have toilets of any kind, and in another five percent cases, toilets available were either not usable or under construction. Again, two thirds of the households had no drainage system at all; in addition, most of the available drainage arrangements were uncovered kutchra drains. It was no different in the delivery of healthcare: while 66 percent of the patients reportedly sought treatment from private

allopathic practitioners (44% quacks, 21% trained medical doctors, and one percent private hospitals), the share of treatment sought in public facilities was only 27 percent. The indication of poorly performing primary health facilities reflected in the miniscule share of treatment sought in the primary facilities (two percent at the health sub-centres in or around the villages, and six percent at the primary health centres PHCs) was further corroborated by the data on (a) difficulty of accessing such services (in 43% percent of the villages surveyed, the nearest health sub-centre was more than two kilometers away and in 51 percent of the villages the nearest PHCs were more than five kilometers away), and (b) poor functioning of the facilities (with huge lack of staff, stuff, and empathy). How poorly equipped the PHCs were could be gauged from the fact that of 54 institutional deliveries, only three were done at the PHCs. Visiting the hospitals for delivery often appeared to be cumbersome and expensive, and yet, absence of facilities for child delivery in the vicinity forced people to take expecting mothers to hospitals to avoid risks related with child birth. Reliance upon for-profit health services owing to the fragility of the publicly delivered health facilities seemed to have multiple implications, including pushing the households into further impoverishment and often receiving sub-standard medical treatment.

Poor Living Standards

Deprived of the basic constitutionally guaranteed facilities that could help reverse their historically constructed future, our study found the Adivasis living in perennial poverty and hunger, continued land alienation with an overreliance upon hard manual labour to survive, and facing multiple harassments inflicted by the state as well as the dominant society. Manifestation of a vicious cycle of lack of opportunities to enhance human capabilities and material deprivations was clearly reflected in the work participation rate (WPR) which denotes the ratio of population engaged in income generating work. In the segments of population with distressed standards of living, the WPR appears higher than the average. For example, while the average WPR for all-India and West Bengal, according to the 2011 Census, were 40 percent and 38 percent respectively, the corresponding figures for the Adivasis were 49 percent and 47 percent. Our survey also found a similar pattern with the WPR at 53 percent, which meant that both children and elderly people were also involved in earning, and that the rate of transition in education was low was in one way or another connected with this feature: forcing the children of school-going age to discontinue their studies in order to fend for themselves and support their families.

That a higher rate of work participation does not signify a better living standard is clear from the employment pattern: 42 percent of the total workers in our

study were involved in manual labour hiring (in both agricultural and non-agricultural sectors). Another 27 percent identified themselves as cultivators. In a setting where 23 percent of the households were landless and 88 percent belonged to the category of marginal farmers, with very limited facility of irrigation and hence devoid of the scope of multiple cropping, the viability of cultivation as an occupation was rather limited. Further, many of the Adivasis were found to be fond of remembering their cultivators' past by identifying themselves as cultivators, but a deeper probe revealed that only a few could depend fully upon cultivation for survival; rather, most of them earned their livelihood from labour hiring.

Changing work patterns have also given way to psycho-social anxiety among Adivasi women about their unprotected dignity. There has been a growing demand for female domestic help in non-tribal households around the localities as well as in various towns. The trait of self-esteem the Adivasis traditionally inherit goes, in many cases, against the kind of work that is demanded of them as domestic help (cleaning utensils of non-Adivasis, for example). Yet, due to economic vulnerabilities, many of the young women are forced to accept the 'offer' of such employment. Despite accepting such work, a number of these women were seen to have encountered a contradiction in their psyche.

The forest had been playing a major contributory role in Adivasi life, but gradual deforestation and reduced usability of the existing forest coverage owing primarily to the denial of rights have resulted in restricting people's dependence upon the forest for livelihood. Only 45 percent of the households relied upon the forest for partial fulfillment of livelihood requirements. Nevertheless, for a small proportion of the households (three percent), the forest offered the primary source of livelihood – they depended upon collection and selling of forest produces. These households were among the most vulnerable, with the members being old and infirm and widows, who are the most disadvantaged groups among the Adivasis. The dependence upon forests seems to have reduced owing to multiple problems: first, the implementation of the Right to Forest Act was found to be very poor. Of the total respondents, only 14 percent were aware of the existence of 'the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006' that legalised the Adivasis' right over forest lands. The absence of proactive measures to inform the population about the initiative was further aggravated by the poor implementation of the Act – even the portion of those who applied for legal titles over forest rights were yet to receive it. In addition, households often complained of being harassed by forest officials.

Owing to poor levels of education and the resultant lack of scope of

employment in sectors that offered higher income, only five percent were found to be engaged in salaried works or other regular wage earning activities. Lack of opportunities of labour hiring was on the rise. This was due mainly to technological innovations and poor implementation of public employment programmes, such as the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) in and around the localities. Work opportunities have also reportedly shrunk in the districts in mainland Bengal (Bardhaman, Hugli) where they had been migrating seasonally to find employment in the agriculture sector—a century old tradition. This resulted in young men migrating long term to distant states to work in construction sites, poultry farms, and other labour intensive sectors. While such migration ensured better income, the collateral implications were also reported to be much higher. For example, as an effect of demonetisation, many of the youth who had migrated to work sites in other states lost huge amounts of money that their employers owed them as wages. The employers simply refused to pay, and without any kind of state or social support, the workers had to come back home without any pay. Health issues were reported to be another problem that migrants often faced: they had to pay for their medical treatment when they fell ill, and owing to the huge work load, poor work conditions and distressing living situations, it was rather common for the migrants to fall ill. Another implication of the newly emerged pattern of migration seemed to have a direct bearing on women. Traditionally, there has been a higher degree of Adivasi women as agricultural workers and owing to long term out migration of the young male workforce, the burden of labour on women tended to increase manifold.

Restricted income opportunity and declined scope of utilisation of natural resources had added to the historically created and persistent problems of the Adivasis, including perennial hunger and the sub-standard quality of nutrition. For example, the proportion of the surveyed households not receiving two square meals a day for some time in the year preceding the survey was found to be much higher – 31 percent; the worst suffers among them being the Savars (63%) followed by the Lodhas (60%). Again, 14 percent of the households suffered inadequacy of food for a period of 30 to 60 days. The perceived adequacy of food was often found to be in variance with the actual: in most cases, the Adivasi perception of adequacy was largely based on the cereal-centric food habit which has deceptively emerged as a cultural aspect but in essence is a product of the biased nuances of political economy of deprivation and hunger.

As regards the food value, for most of the households the diet contained mostly cereal; seldom could they afford to eat animal protein and pulses. Forest degradation had severely reduced the availability of natural nutrients like

mushrooms, birds and animals, and wild vegetables. Availability of fish and other mollusks and amphibians that met a certain amount of protein requirements has also tremendously decreased due to environmental degradation (owing to indiscriminate use of pesticides, for instance). Scarcity of food, multiplied with vices that emerge out of poverty, such as alcoholism, and the fragility of the public health system seemed to have resulted in lower life chances among the Adivasis than their more privileged co-citizens. The number of deaths reported in the surveyed households in the year preceding the survey was 52, among which 48 (92%) were caused by various ailments, and four were due to old age. The average age of the people who died was 58 years – much shorter than the life expectancy at birth of the average of West Bengal (70 years).

Social and Spatial Variations

As mentioned in the beginning, Adivasis do not form a homogenous community – there have been myriad variations in land ownership, dependence on forest, literacy level, employment pattern, language, culture, and so on. Achievements related to socio-economic well-being were found to vary across groups and places among the members of the same community. For example, the average figure of availability of toilets (51 percent) was completely irrelevant for the surveyed Lodha households, none of which had any toilet facility. Again, although 12 percent of the households could not afford food more than twice a day (not necessarily full meals to fill the stomach), the corresponding figure for the Lodhas was 47 percent – shrinking of the traditional, nature-dependent livelihood and lack of other, newer avenues of sustenance (agriculture, regular wage earning, service sector employment, and so on) seemed to have impacted the Lodha and similar groups adversely. Similarly, while the survey found the ratio of out of school children at the elementary level to be six percent, it was as high as 26 percent among the Lodhas. Likewise, the average extent of landlessness (23%) was confounded by a much higher figure among the Tamang and Oraon households (73% each). Aside from the inter-community variations, particular geographical and historical settings were found to result in wide spatial variations. For example, the average extent of landlessness (23%) sharply contrasted with the figures of Jalpaiguri and Darjeeling (55% and 50% respectively). Again, while a modest 26 percent of the total pre-primary children attended private institutions, for Darjeeling and Jalpaiguri the figures were as high as 79 percent and 70 percent respectively. Similar trends were observed at the primary level. Poor delivery of the public education system and the trickle-down effect of the practices in the relatively solvent societies appeared to have given way to an emerging shadow education system in the form of private tuitions: half of the total students pursuing elementary education were

reportedly taking private tuitions – the ratio was much higher for the students enrolled in private schools. Interestingly, 27 percent of the private tutors were Adivasi youths – mostly unemployed boys and girls. While demonstrating the weaknesses of public education, the data on private tuition revealed a prospect. The fact that one third of the children were taking private tuitions from the Adivasi youth meant that there were locally available resources that could be utilised in a meaningful way – involving the youth in primary and elementary schools through innovative mechanisms. Such utilisation could meet, at least to an extent, the dearth of human resources in the schools attended by Adivasi children. At the same time, it could also solve, to a large extent, the problems of language and culture that created a huge distance between teachers and students and often appeared to be an insurmountable barrier in the delivery of education through the public system.

The socio-economic variations were found to be extended to more complex areas, namely, politics, which in turn gave way to further marginalisation. For instance, relative political strength in certain areas, mainly in southern Bengal and also in parts of northern Bengal, seemed to be able to resist land alienation, which was not the case in other areas like the North 24 Parganas. In some villages, lands cultivated by the Adivasis have allegedly been grabbed by local powerful lobbies to convert them into fisheries. In some other areas inhabited by vulnerable groups, extra economic coercion like beating, sexual abuse of women, making people work for low wage rates were also reported. Also, in many areas, exploitation of relatively weaker Adivasis by comparatively powerful Adivasis was found to be common.

Although we could not incorporate the numerically smaller groups into the survey, our observations and interactions with some of the members of those groups revealed particular vulnerabilities of these sections. For example, the Baiga, Chik Baraik, Chero, Ho, Mal Pahariya, and Sauriya Pahariya—groups that have in-migrated from Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh—seemed to have witnessed a major change in their occupational pattern. While elsewhere the groups tended to depend more on cultivation—both settled and shift—the loss of their natural setting on one hand and numerical weakness on the other left them socially and economically alienated from their cultural history.

Policy Implications

Democratic denial and adverse participation have not only been significant factors in the socio-economic under-development of the Adivasis but also seemed to have created a terrible fracture in their social psyche and organisation. The continued insistence on the modernity upheld by the ruling sections as not

only superior to the others but also projected as ‘the authentic modern’ has more often than not had a different—and disquieting—effect on the Adivasi mind. The imposed superiority of the ruling ‘modern’ resulted in the Adivasis’ looking down upon their own self as inferior, ‘primitive’ and taking a fatalistic view of the subjugated life they are forced to live. While this pushes them to the margin and abandon altogether some of their socially unifying customs and cultural practices, particularly democratic norms and human values that have evolved through a protracted journey of collective living and struggles for existence, the helplessness owing to the ‘othering’ thrusts upon them a segregated insularity. One casualty, for example, of the imposed inferiority on the Adivasis is the erosion of the great linguistic heritage among some of their sections. However, the acceptance by the Adivasis of the imposed modern does not guarantee their inclusion into the apparent mainstream; rather, they are often reminded of their ‘primitive’ roots and kept alienated. Again, pushed by the primitiveness of the ruling modern—exploitation and oppression, marginalisation and subjugation—the Adivasis, in many cases, cling to oppressive behaviours such as witchcraft, which makes the label of the ‘primitive’ upon them even more indelible. The vicious cycle of political-economic deprivation and social alienation continues to keep them subjugated to the ruling modern. The situation of supplying cheap labour and living half-fed lives with no opportunities to flourish and develop their human capabilities is seemingly unalterable.

The context adds urgency to the necessity to consider the Adivasi question in a dialectical manner: thinking anew about changing the policies following a half-century old insistence that Verrier Elwin made. He warned the Indian authorities in no ambiguous terms:

We cannot allow matters to drift in the tribal areas or just not take interest in them. In the world of today that is just not possible or desirable. At the same time we should avoid over-administering these areas and in particular, sending too many outsiders into their territory. It is between these two extreme positions that we have to function. Development in various ways there has to be, such as communication, medical facilities, education and better agriculture.

He drew a broad framework with five fundamental principles: avoiding imposition, respecting Adivasi land and forest rights, building Adivasi agency for self-development, avoiding over-administration and working through the Adivasis’ own cultural and social organisations, and judging the results “not by statistics or the amount of money spent, but by the quality of human character that is evolved.”¹

1 Elwin (1959)

It is therefore important to go beyond the administrative convention of bracketing Adivasis as a single category. Rather, policy framing requires mandatory recognition of the wide social, cultural, economic, and other diversities so as to address the different problems faced by different groups – by community as well as by region. For example, it may require special initiatives to expand the educational opportunities for those at the bottom. Similarly, while it may be mandatory to improve irrigation facilities for the agriculturist communities among the Adivasis, it would involve a distinct programme for the non-agriculturist groups who depend more on forest or other natural resources.

It is also important to abide by the general constitutional rules which are often violated by the state. In other words, the very common instances of violation of the Right to Forest Act, the Right to Education Act, the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act, and such, have to be eliminated. It is not very difficult to identify the issues related to accessing the educational opportunities by the Adivasi children in general, and children within certain groups in particular. They include difficulties of physical access, the problem of language and culture, and the contrast between the apparent backwardness of these communities as imagined by the authorities and a very different objective reality that upholds a plethora of cultural strength that can be fruitfully utilised while planning educational initiatives. Utilisation of resources available in the form of educated Adivasi youths is just one of several ways that can be found as a means to achieve this end.

Similarly, the terrible neglect in public delivery of healthcare must not be allowed to continue. Contrasting sharply with the general belief of the implementers, Adivasis tended to make use of the publicly delivered healthcare system as and when available. Things can take a radically changed turn by making the primary healthcare system, and other public programmes like education, employment, forest rights, and so on, effective.

The possibility of a fair implementation of the public programmes, however, is contingent to an agentic involvement of the concerned communities. Instead of mere passive recipients they must be respected as active agents of change and be involved in all spheres of policy—from planning to implementation.

The general challenges of cultural threat in terms of language, social structure, and economic progress tend to have particular relevance for the numerically smaller groups. Social policy needs to address these problems with special attention and emphasis.

Finally, it is imperative that the entire outlook on the Adivasi question be reversed. Instead of seeing the Adivasis as ‘problems,’ the entire country can

benefit massively by perceiving the Adivasis as co-citizens and sharing their historically constructed cultural values which often manifest the best forms of democracy and uphold the notions of higher levels of justice, fairness, and equality than those which prevail in the seemingly mainstream societies. By ensuring their rights to live their own lives, the country can in fact guarantee itself a flourishing democracy.

The findings of the study, as mentioned in the beginning, are neither comprehensive nor definitive in nature. There were many areas that the study could not look into. Nevertheless, the indications of the study can usefully add to social inquiry as well as policy modifications.



Waiting for good time: Bediyas in a village of 24 Parganas

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The Process of the Study

The Course

The Asiatic Society and Pratichi Institute signed the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) on the study in January 2018. Prior to the signing of the MoU, a workshop was organized on 5-6 July 2017 at the Asiatic Society in order to draw insights and suggestions of academics and other experts to fine tune the conceptual contents of the proposal. After signing the MoU, the tools were finalized through a series of consultancy with experts. The formation of the team of investigators was proceeding simultaneously. The emphasis of the research proposal to incorporate at least half of the team members from the Adivasis communities was fulfilled and 7 men and 4 women from different communities were recruited. A five day training was organized to make the investigators fully conversant with the research tools. The training was followed by a field pre-testing of the tools and based on the inputs of the pre-testing the tools were further modified. A group of senior researchers from Pratichi Institute trained in qualitative research methods took charge of the qualitative part of the study. The household survey was done between March-June 2018. Fieldwork continued as researchers noted observations and conducted interviews, and answered specific questions raised during the writing of the report. The preliminary findings of the report were released on January 8, 2019 in a workshop organized at the Asiatic Society. Comments and suggestions received during the workshop proved very useful in finalising the report.

Selection of Districts

As per the latest notification by the Government, there are 40 Adivasi groups in West Bengal. With five million people, they form 5.5 percent of the total population of the state. As is the case at the country level, the concentration of the Adivasi population in West Bengal is very high in some pockets of the state. Thus, while the share of Adivasi population was more than one fifth of the total population in Darjeeling district in 2011 (21.5% to be exact), the corresponding

shares for districts like Koch Bihar or Purba Medinipur were below one percent. Hence, to have an idea on the socio-economic status of the Adivasis in West Bengal, districts with reasonable presence of the Adivasis were naturally selected for the present study (with some relaxation in the selection). Ten out of the 19 districts of West Bengal that existed during the latest population enumeration (2011) were selected for the study (four districts, namely, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Paschim Medinipur, and Bardhaman were divided after the enumeration of Census 2011. Since disaggregated data for the newly created districts were not available, the study chose to base the survey on the old administrative divisions, i.e. 19 districts). However, in order to capture the geographically linked socio-economic variations, the study included in its purview two districts, namely, Hoogly and North 24 Parganas, despite them not having a proportionately high Adivasi population. Following this criterion, the study excluded two relatively highly Adivasi populated districts, namely, Dakshin Dinajpur and Uttar Dinajpur, features of which were quite similar to Malda, a selected district. Finally, three districts each from North Bengal, Central Bengal, and South-West Bengal, and one district from South-East Bengal were selected for this study. We have shown in Table M.1 the district wise proportionate Adivasi population and the selected districts (shaded).

Selection of Blocks

It needs to be borne in mind that neither the Census nor any other source of information provides the distribution of Adivasi population by their communities at lower level than the districts. Hence, to select the primary sample unit of village for conducting household survey, two to four blocks (depending on the projected strength of the sample size) were selected first from each selected district on the basis of higher share of Adivasi population and the villages were then selected from those blocks purposively depending on the information received regarding the study groups from various sources. Although the blocks having higher share of Adivasi population were selected for the study in general, some compromise had to be made to capture the geographical variation for the study. The household sample size ranged from 10 to 15 in general for any selected village. Altogether, 85 villages were surveyed for this study covering 1000 households (see Table M.2).

Selection of Communities and Households

The selection was done through a rigorous process of a series of consultations with experts. As the share of various Adivasi communities to the total Adivasi population in West Bengal ranged from 47 percent (Santals) to almost zero (Mru) (see Table A.S.M.1 in Appendix II), it was impossible for us to select all the Adivasi communities for this study. There were some groups, such as

the Mech or Lepcha, that did not have adequate presence at the state level but had substantial presence in some districts. To resolve this problem, the Adivasi communities in West Bengal were divided into four groups according to their population and the communities having population below 25,000 were kept out of consideration for the study (see Table A.S.M.1 in Appendix II). In this way 17 out of 40 Adivasi groups were selected for the study (see Table M.3).

However, Adivasis in West Bengal live mainly in villages (92% as per Census 2011). This feature was more or less true for all Adivasi groups in West Bengal (see Table A.S.M.2 in Appendix II). The low concentration of the Adivasis in the urban areas did not permit us to statistically draw adequate sample and the reach of the study was thus decided to be kept confined to rural areas. The sample size for each Adivasi group under study has been presented in Table M.3. The study tried to make a balance between proportionate representation and making the representation reasonably acceptable. Hence, it was decided to take at least 30 households from each community irrespective of their share to total population. Santals having highest population in West Bengal (kept in Group I) had the sample size of 250 (highest one) and Mal Pahariya, Bhutia-Sherpa-Toto-Dukpa group, Savar, Mech, Limbu, Lepcha, and Rava having population in a range of 25,000 to 100,000 (kept in Group 3) had the lowest sample size of 30.

Following the distribution of study population for each selected district, the sample size for the selected Adivasi groups was projected for the selected districts. However, due to unavailability of some selected Adivasi population in the sampled areas, the projected distribution of sample could not be strictly followed. Further, we encountered a problem of unavailability of *Mal Pahariya* people in our sampled areas, primarily because of (a) their being populated in districts outside the selected ones, and (b) the concentration of their population in districts with some presence being very sparse. Constraint of time did not allow the study team to find the Mal Pahariyas in their respective residences. Hence, the sample for the *Mal Pahariyas* (30 households) was replaced by the *Santals*. Thus, the final distribution of sample for this study was as presented in Table M.4.

Separate interview schedules were used for conducting household survey and village survey. Both qualitative and quantitative data were collected for the survey while conducting in-depth interviews and group discussions. CSPro was used for quantitative data entry, and analysis of the same was done using SPSS. Qualitative data were coded manually and merged with the quantitative data while writing the report.

Table M.1. Share of Adivasi population in West Bengal by district in 2011 (in descending order)

State/District	Total Adivasi population	% of Adivasis population to total population
1. Darjeeling	397389	21.52
2. Jalpaiguri	731704	18.89
3. Purulia	540652	18.45
4. DakshinDinajpur	275366	16.43
5. PaschimMedinipur	880015	14.88
6. Bankura	368690	10.25
7. Maldah	313984	7.87
8. Birbhum	242484	6.92
9. Bardhaman	489447	6.34
10. Uttar Dinajpur	162816	5.41
11. Hugli	229243	4.15
12. Nadia	140700	2.72
13. North 24 Parganas	264597	2.64
14. Murshidabad	91035	1.28
15. South 24 Parganas	96976	1.19
16. Koch Bihar	18125	0.64
17. PurbaMedinipur	27952	0.55
18. Haora	15094	0.31
19. Kolkata	10684	0.24
West Bengal	5296953	5.80

Census 2011

Note: Shaded districts selected for the study

Table M.2. Blocks selected for the study

District selected	Blocks selected	Total villages selected
Darjeeling	Kalimpong I, Kalimpong II, Kurseong and Phansideowa	11
Jalpaiguri	Kalchini, Madarihat, Metali and Nagrakata	17
Malda	Habibpur, Gazole and Manikchak	7
Birbhum	BolpurSriniketan and Rajnagar	3
Bardhaman	Memari II and Baraboni	6
Hoogly	Pandua and Dhaniakhali	3
Bankura	Ranibandh and Raipur	6
Purulia	Bandwan, Manbazar II and Balarampur	9
PaschimMedinidpur	Binpur II, Keshiary, Nayagram and Gopiballavpur I	16
North 24 Parganas	Sandeshkhali I and Sandeshkhali II	7
Total 10 Districts	28 Blocks	85

Table M.3. Sample Size for Selected 17 Adivasi Groups

Community	Rural Population	Percentage Share in total rural population	Percentage share within each Group	Household Sample Size
Group 1 (Santal)				
Santal	2,362,003	48.6	100.0	250
Sub-Total	2,362,003	48.6	100.0	250
Group 2 (Adivasis with population 100,000-600,000)				
Oraon	599,707	12.4	36.2	80
Bhumij	361,355	7.4	21.8	70
Munda	338,782	7.0	20.5	70
Kora	145,013	3.0	8.8	60
Tamang	106,454	2.2	6.4	60
Lodha-Kharia	104,328	2.1	6.3	60
Sub-Total	1,655,639	34.1	100.0	400.0
Group 3 (Adivasis with population 25,000-100,000)				
Kisan	93,799	1.9	18.6	50
Bediya	85,571	1.8	17.0	50
Mahali	73,038	1.5	14.5	40
Mal Pahariya	41,443	0.9	8.2	30
Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpaetc	40,608	0.8	8.1	30
Savar	38,817	0.8	7.7	30
Mech	37,886	0.8	7.5	30
Limbu	36,908	0.8	7.3	30
Lepcha	29,197	0.6	5.8	30
Rabha	26,604	0.5	5.3	30
Sub-Total	503,871	10.4	100.0	350
Group 4 (Adivasis with population less than 25,000)				
23 Tribal Groups	333,602	6.9	—	—
Sub-Total	333,602	6.9	—	—
Total	4,855,115	100.0	—	—

Note: Population as per Census 2011

**Table M.4. Distribution of household sample by districts (after completion of survey)
for selected Adivasi communities**

Community	Darjee- ling	Jalpai- guri	Malda	Bir- bhum	Bardha- man	Hoogly	Ban- kura	Puru- liya	P Medini- pur	N 24 Pgs	Household Sample size
Santal	6	4	30	28	47	19	37	45	64	0	280
Oraon	15	60	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	5	80
Bhumij	0	0	0	0	0	5	9	23	25	8	70
Munda	5	24	0	0	0	1	0	3	22	15	70
Kora	0	0	0	6	12	5	6	18	13	0	60
Tamang	45	15	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	60
Lodha-Kharia	1	20	0	0	0	2	2	0	35	0	60
Kisan	1	0	49	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50
Bediya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	50	50
Mahali	0	17	0	2	2	0	1	7	7	4	40
Mal Pahariya	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa	14	16	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Savar	3	0	0	0	0	1	2	9	15	0	30
Mech	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Limbu	27	3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Lepcha	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Rabha	0	30	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	30
Total	147	219	79	36	61	33	57	105	181	82	1000

Tables from Secondary Data

Table A.S.2.1. Degree of Advasis lagging behind in literacy: percentage point difference between average and Adivasi literacy rates in India and West Bengal (1961–2011)

	India			West Bengal		
Year	Female	Male	All	Female	Male	All
1961	12.2	26.6	19.8	18.5	35.4	28.0
1971	17.2	28.4	23.2	19.3	28.3	24.3
1981	22.0	31.9	27.3	31.1	38.7	35.5
1991	21.1	23.5	22.6	31.6	27.7	29.9
2001	18.9	16.1	17.7	30.5	19.6	25.2
2011	16.15	13.57	15.04	22.8	13.5	18.4

Source: Census of India, various years

Table A.S.2.2. Literacy rates (in percent) among the Adivasis in West Bengal by district and by gender: 2011

District	Female	Male	All	Gender gap	Difference between average and Adivasi literacy rate (in % point)	% point change in Adivasi literacy rate (2001-2011)
Bankura	46	72.9	59.4	26.9	10.9	9.8
Bardhaman	44.2	65.4	54.7	21.2	21.5	12.9
Birbhum	37.7	57.6	47.5	19.9	23.2	16.3
Dakshin Dinajpur	48.5	65.5	57	17	15.8	14.2
Darjeeling	67.2	81.5	74.3	14.3	5.3	18.8
Haora	64.2	77.1	70.9	12.9	12.4	18.8
Hugli	50.3	71.4	60.7	21.1	21.1	15.3
Jalpaiguri	49.5	67.9	58.7	18.4	14.6	16.1
Koch Bihar	58.4	74.8	66.9	16.4	7.9	11.6
Kolkata	76.6	86.8	82.1	10.2	4.2	5.7
Maldah	37.9	55.8	46.9	17.9	14.8	14.7
Murshidabad	43.3	59.2	51.3	15.9	15.3	15.5
Nadia	50	65.4	57.8	15.4	17.2	17.2
North 24 Parganas	56.4	72.9	64.8	16.5	19.3	18.7
PaschimMedinipur	48.1	71	59.6	22.9	18.4	NA
PurbaMedinipur	54.4	74.7	64.7	20.3	22.3	NA
Purulia	39.8	67.8	53.9	28	10.6	16.4
South 24 Parganas	50.2	69	59.7	18.8	17.8	15.1
Uttar Dinajpur	35.5	52	43.8	16.5	15.3	14.5
West Bengal	47.7	68.2	57.9	20.5	18.1	16.4

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table A.S.2.3. Literacy rates (in percent) among the Adivasis in West Bengal by community: 2011

Community	Literacy Rate (2011)				Percentage point change in Literacy rate (2001-11)	Community	Literacy Rate (2011)			Gender gap	Percentage point change in Literacy rate (2001-11)
	Female	Male	All	Gender gap			Female	Male	All		
Asur	35.0	55.2	45.1	20.2	17.2	Korwa	45.3	62.8	53.9	17.5	5.0
Baiga	50.0	72.8	61.4	22.8	18.0	Lepcha	77.9	86.8	82.4	8.9	7.2
Bedia, Bediya	54.2	72.5	63.5	18.3	15.1	L o d h a , K h e r i a , Kharia	36.2	54.6	45.5	18.4	10.7
Bhumij	48.1	70.7	59.5	22.6	13.9	L o h a r a , Lohra	45.2	65.4	55.3	20.2	6.0
Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yolmo	75.5	86.7	81.1	11.2	8.5	Magh	85.1	91.6	88.3	6.5	1.2
Birhor	46.1	69.3	58.2	23.2	22.5	Mahali	43.6	66.3	55.0	22.7	13.9
Birjia	36.2	60.0	48.4	23.8	28.5	Mahli	41.3	59.8	50.7	18.5	13.6
Chakma	69.5	83.8	76.8	14.3	-8.6	M a l Pahariya	36.5	49.0	42.8	12.5	18.3
Chero	52.5	73.2	62.7	20.7	10.6	Mech	67.6	80.8	74.2	13.2	8.7
ChikBaraik	51.2	74.0	62.6	22.8	12.5	Mru	53.0	70.2	61.7	17.2	21.6
Garo	73.9	81.8	77.8	7.9	11.7	Munda	48.3	67.1	57.7	18.8	16.7
Gond	65.9	82.9	74.8	17.0	12.0	Nagesia	53.5	70.1	61.8	16.6	28.8
Gorait	22.6	41.2	32.0	18.6	4.0	Oraon	49.9	68.1	59.0	18.2	15.6
Hajang	61.9	85.3	74.4	23.4	20.1	Parhaiya	34.1	42.3	38.2	8.2	8.5
Ho	43.2	65.2	54.3	22.0	17.6	Rabha	53.8	68.4	61.3	14.6	17.7
Karmali	55.9	79.6	67.9	23.7	12.4	Santal	43.5	66.1	54.7	22.6	12.5
Kharwar	54.7	73.8	64.5	19.1	12.4	Sauria Paharia	38.9	49.2	44.0	10.3	14.1
Khond	50.7	67.2	59.1	16.5	-3.4	Savar	31.5	49.9	40.6	18.4	14.3
Kisan	43.9	62.4	53.4	18.5	9.5	Limbu (Subba)	74.7	87.8	81.2	13.1	NA
Kora	45.1	67.8	56.5	22.7	13.1	Tamang	73.3	87.7	80.4	14.4	NA
All Schedule Tribes	47.7	68.2	57.9	20.5	14.5	All Schedule Tribes	47.7	68.2	57.9	20.5	14.5

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table A.S.4.1. Distribution of Adivasi main workers of West Bengal by category of work and by community (in percent)

Community	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourers	Household Industry	Other work
Asur	2.4	17.4	0.2	80.0
Baiga	16.3	65.9	1.8	16.0
Bedia, Bediya	26.5	46.3	3.3	24.0
Bhumij	15.7	61.3	2.0	21.0
Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yolmo	15.9	6.5	1.6	76.0
Birhor	9.6	37.0	5.9	47.4
Birjia	7.6	25.3	2.0	65.1
Chakma	5.7	7.6	10.2	76.4
Chero	7.1	24.8	3.0	65.1
Chik Baraik	4.6	9.3	0.7	85.4
Garo	15.7	9.1	0.4	74.8
Gond	8.8	12.8	1.8	76.6
Gorait	4.0	16.5	25.9	53.6
Hajang	8.5	14.4	0.5	76.6
Ho	7.9	64.8	2.8	24.6
Karmali	29.8	40.9	2.0	27.3
Kharwar	11.0	39.7	1.7	47.7
Khond	1.8	69.6	0.0	28.6
Kisan	16.6	40.8	14.2	28.3
Kora	11.6	64.3	0.7	23.4
Korwa	2.9	21.7	1.4	74.0
Lepcha	42.5	9.8	0.8	46.9
Lodha, Kheria, Kharia	5.7	50.2	2.3	41.8
Lohara, Lohra	6.4	42.4	2.2	49.0
Magh	0.5	15.8	1.3	82.5
Mahali	3.5	23.5	21.8	51.2
Mahli	4.4	37.6	10.2	47.7
Mal Pahariya	4.6	69.3	0.8	25.2
Mech	32.8	26.7	1.5	39.0
Mru	2.2	20.0	0.0	77.8
Munda	12.1	44.0	1.5	42.4
Nagesia	11.7	18.2	3.9	66.3
Oraon	11.4	25.0	0.7	62.9
Parhaiya	7.1	68.6	1.0	23.3
Rabha	37.6	38.9	2.2	21.3
Santal	18.0	62.9	0.9	18.3
Sauria Paharia	5.5	42.8	0.6	51.1
Savar	7.9	59.1	3.0	29.9
Limbu (Subba)	22.0	8.7	1.3	68.1
Tamang	10.5	5.1	1.3	83.1
All Schedule Tribes	15.4	49.4	1.8	33.5

Source: Census of India, 2011

**Table A.S.4.2. Distribution of Adivasi total workers in rural areas of West Bengal
by category of work and by community (in percent)**

Community	Cultivators	Agricultural Labourer	Household Industry	Other Workers
Asur	2.2	19.7	0.4	77.6
Baiga	10.8	74.8	4.1	10.3
Bedia, Bediya	19.4	57.7	3.3	19.7
Bhumij	11.7	70.9	3.0	14.4
Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yolmo	27.3	18.1	2.8	51.8
Birhor	8.6	58.6	6.9	25.9
Birjia	6.4	42.2	1.4	49.9
Chakma	8.0	8.0	12.5	71.4
Chero	7.6	34.0	3.1	55.2
ChikBaraik	4.5	12.6	1.1	81.8
Garo	15.1	20.9	1.0	62.9
Gond	12.4	24.8	2.5	60.3
Gorait	3.8	37.2	21.2	37.8
Hajang	16.4	24.2	0.8	58.6
Ho	6.9	73.9	2.5	16.6
Karmali	23.5	52.6	7.7	16.1
Kharwar	9.5	54.3	1.5	34.7
Khond	1.8	74.6	0.4	23.2
Kisan	11.6	46.5	16.9	25.0
Kora	9.0	74.0	1.1	15.8
Korwa	3.9	25.0	1.2	69.8
Lepcha	43.9	28.8	1.0	26.3
Lodha, Kheria, Kharia	4.3	58.4	3.5	33.9
Lohara, Lohra	5.3	46.5	2.9	45.3
Magh	1.1	52.5	1.7	44.7
Mahali	3.4	29.6	25.3	41.7
Mahli	5.1	46.6	17.0	31.3
Mal Pahariya	4.1	73.8	1.0	21.1
Mech	29.5	35.7	1.6	33.2
Mru	3.6	44.6	1.8	50.0
Munda	10.3	54.0	2.5	33.3
Nagesia	11.0	23.2	3.9	61.9
Oraon	10.2	30.3	1.1	58.5
Parhaiya	5.6	63.0	1.0	30.4
Rabha	30.9	47.5	2.1	19.4
Santal	13.8	72.1	1.8	12.3
SauriaPaharia	5.3	50.9	0.9	42.9
Savar	5.0	66.2	4.9	23.9
Limbu (Subba)	28.8	18.6	1.6	51.0
Tamang	15.3	12.3	1.9	70.4
All Schedule Tribes	12.8	60.9	2.6	23.7

Source: Census of India, 2011

Table A.S.4.3. Community-wise Worker Population Ratio (WPR) among the Adivasis of West Bengal (in percent)

Community	WPR
Asur	43.7
Baiga	51.6
Bedia, Bediya	42.9
Bhumij	48.4
Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yolmo	36.7
Birhor	47.1
Birjia	47.6
Chakma	39.9
Chero	39.7
Chik Baraik	43.8
Garo	41.6
Gond	36.8
Gorait	49.4
Hajang	36.6
Ho	51.7
Karmali	47.3
Kharwar	38.8
Khond	48.5
Kisan	41.9
Kora	48.9
Korwa	44.1
Lepcha	40.0
Lodha, Kheria, Kharia	49.0
Lohara, Lohra	42.5
Magh	37.2
Mahali	46.0
Mahli	45.2
Mal Pahariya	45.8
Mech	41.3
Mru	36.5
Munda	45.7
Nagesia	38.5
Oraon	43.2
Parhaiya	47.8
Rabha	45.1
Santal	50.5
Sauria Paharia	40.2
Savar	50.0
Limbu (Subba)	38.6
Tamang	37.0
All Schedule Tribes – West Bengal	47.4
All Schedule Tribes – India	48.7
All Social Groups – West Bengal	38.1
All Social Groups – India	39.8

Source: Census of India,
2011

Table A.S.5.1. Status of MGNREGA work

	Average days of employment provided per Household			Total Households Worked [In Lakhs*]			Person-days Generated so far [In Lakhs*]		
	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17	2018-19	2017-18	2016-17
Andhra Pradesh	57.96	53.09	51.67	42.20	39.95	39.84	2445.86	2120.92	2058.78
Arunachal Pradesh	42.94	30.20	42.08	1.60	1.42	2.03	68.70	42.80	85.35
Assam	30.60	28.54	29.68	17.46	16.85	15.70	534.25	480.86	466.09
Bihar	42.20	36.36	37.39	29.25	22.47	22.95	1234.42	817.20	858.36
Chhattishgarh	56.75	51.55	41.55	24.43	23.26	21.32	1386.07	1199.29	885.94
Goa	13.11	15.38	18.69	0.01	0.06	0.07	0.15	0.99	1.26
Gujarat	46.05	41.00	37.86	9.11	8.61	7.16	419.62	353.09	271.06
Haryana	33.73	33.12	30.21	2.31	2.73	2.81	77.90	90.37	84.92
Himachal Pradesh	51.51	43.03	44.74	5.54	5.11	5.29	285.20	220.06	236.61
Jammu & Kashmir	56.65	54.36	50.81	6.56	6.82	6.21	371.40	370.90	315.59
Jharkhand	42.17	41.03	40.60	12.73	14.45	17.42	536.66	592.74	707.44
Karnataka	49.59	45.05	50.27	21.10	19.02	18.18	1046.40	856.99	914.06
Kerala	65.97	47.24	46.97	14.78	13.12	14.57	975.26	619.59	684.62
Madhya Pradesh	51.79	46.61	40.34	39.19	34.81	28.02	2029.97	1622.46	1130.39
Maharashtra	47.18	48.62	49.47	17.93	16.98	14.33	846.01	825.32	708.94
Manipur	22.88	12.47	23.08	5.13	4.91	5.16	117.39	61.25	119.03
Meghalaya	71.97	68.37	68.15	4.75	4.27	4.15	342.15	291.88	282.54
Mizoram	92.47	75.63	88.90	1.96	1.91	1.89	181.22	144.38	168.23
Nagaland	34.41	48.82	69.49	3.86	4.10	4.18	132.92	200.03	290.71
Odisha	38.65	39.98	38.09	21.50	23.07	20.33	830.87	922.11	774.48
Punjab	30.30	33.62	29.41	6.75	6.64	5.36	204.47	223.11	157.73
Rajasthan	56.97	53.11	56.03	51.65	45.14	46.35	2942.36	2397.74	2596.74
Sikkim	54.20	54.30	67.72	0.62	0.64	0.68	33.50	34.61	46.12
Tamil Nadu	46.08	41.08	63.87	55.92	58.15	62.62	2576.97	2388.81	3999.42
Telangana	46.66	45.32	42.28	25.21	25.33	25.60	1176.29	1147.73	1082.19
Tripura	46.07	33.68	79.79	5.49	5.23	5.77	253.09	176.04	460.67
Uttar Pradesh	42.03	37.35	31.44	50.60	48.60	50.09	2126.89	1815.23	1575.01
Uttarakhand	45.35	43.76	43.49	4.89	5.10	5.44	221.83	223.02	236.71
West Bengal	77.05	59.63	40.44	43.93	52.41	58.24	3384.73	3125.55	2355.51
India	50.85	45.69	46.00	5.27	5.12	5.12	267.91	233.74	235.65

Source: http://mnregaweb4.nic.in/netnrega/all_lv1_details_dashboard_new.aspx accessed on 08.06.2019

* For India, in Crores

Table A.S.M.1. Share of individual Adivasi groups to total Adivasi population in West Bengal in 2011 (in descending order)

Community	Total population	% to Total population
Santal	2,512,331	47.43
Oraon	643,510	12.15
Bhumij	376,296	7.10
Munda	366,386	6.92
Kora	159,404	3.01
Tamang	146,203	2.76
Lodha, Kheria, Kharia	108,707	2.05
Kisan	98,434	1.86
Bedia, Bediya	88,772	1.68
Mahali	81,594	1.54
Rabha	27,820	0.53
Mal Pahariya	44,538	0.84
Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpa, Kagatay, Tibetan, Yolmo	66,627	1.26
Savar	40,374	0.76
Limbu (Subba)	46,847	0.88
Mech	41,242	0.78
Lepcha	33,962	0.64
Lohara, Lohra	24,783	0.47
Nagesia	16,378	0.31
Ho	23,483	0.44
ChikBaraik	21,376	0.40
Kharwar	20,270	0.38
Gond	13,535	0.26
Baiga	13,423	0.25
Chero	5,477	0.10
Mahli	2,609	0.05
SauriaPaharia	3,480	0.07
Asur	3,864	0.07
Birhor	2,241	0.04
Korwa	2,912	0.05
Magh	8,032	0.15
Karmali	2,466	0.05
Gorait	2,498	0.05
Garos	2,039	0.04
Birjia	1,123	0.02
Parhaiya	921	0.02
Hajang	621	0.01
Khond	660	0.01
Chakma	466	0.01
Mru	197	0.00
All Schedule Tribes	5,296,953	100.00

Source: Census of India, 2011

Note: Communities in shaded portion selected for the study

Table A.S.M.2. Distribution of Adivasi population in West Bengal by residence in 2011 (in percent)

Community	Total population	Rural population	% Rural population	Urban population	% Urban population
Santal	2,512,331	2,362,003	94.0	150,328	6.0
Oraon	643,510	599,707	93.2	43,803	6.8
Bhumij	376,296	361,355	96.0	14,941	4.0
Munda	366,386	338,782	92.5	27,604	7.5
Kora	159,404	145,013	91.0	14,391	9.0
Tamang	146,203	106,454	72.8	39,749	27.2
Lodha, Kheria, Kharia	108,707	104,328	96.0	4,379	4.0
Kisan	98,434	93,799	95.3	4,635	4.7
Bedia, Bediya	88,772	85,571	96.4	3,201	3.6
Mahali	81,594	73,038	89.5	8,556	10.5
Bhutia, Sherpa, Toto, Dukpaetc	66,627	40,608	60.9	26,019	39.1
Limbu (Subba)	46,847	36,908	78.8	9,939	21.2
Mal Pahariya	44,538	41,443	93.1	3,095	6.9
Mech	41,242	37,886	91.9	3,356	8.1
Savar	40,374	38,817	96.1	1,557	3.9
Lepcha	33,962	29,197	86.0	4,765	14.0
Rabha	27,820	26,604	95.6	1,216	4.4
Lohara, Lohra	24,783	23,413	94.5	1,370	5.5
Ho	23,483	22,093	94.1	1,390	5.9
ChikBaraik	21,376	20,786	97.2	590	2.8
Kharwar	20,270	17,602	86.8	2,668	13.2
Nagesia	16,378	13,704	83.7	2,674	16.3
Gond	13,535	7,353	54.3	6,182	45.7
Baiga	13,423	12,872	95.9	551	4.1
Magh	8,032	2,314	28.8	5,718	71.2
Chero	5,477	4,307	78.6	1,170	21.4
Asur	3,864	3,529	91.3	335	8.7
SauriaPaharia	3,480	3,119	89.6	361	10.4
Korwa	2,912	2,512	86.3	400	13.7
Mahli	2,609	2,167	83.1	442	16.9
Gorait	2,498	2,160	86.5	338	13.5
Karmali	2,466	2,241	90.9	225	9.1
Birhor	2,241	1,910	85.2	331	14.8
Garo	2,039	1,706	83.7	333	16.3
Birjia	1,123	1,023	91.1	100	8.9
Parhaiya	921	858	93.2	63	6.8
Khond	660	560	84.8	100	15.2
Hajang	621	351	56.5	270	43.5
Chakma	466	255	54.7	211	45.3
Mru	197	152	77.2	45	22.8
All Schedule Tribes	5,296,953	4,855,115	91.7	441,838	8.3

Source: Census of India, 2011

Tables from Primary Data-2018

Table A.2.1. District wise and standard wise percent distribution of Adivasi students receiving private tuition

District	Students taking private tuition						Total Students
	Pre-primary	Primary	Upper primary	Secondary	H. Secondary	Total	
Darjeeling	28.6 (4)	42.6 (20)	37.5 (21)	28.1 (9)	13.3 (2)	34.1 (56)	164
Jalpaiguri	40.7 (11)	60.4 (32)	52.5 (31)	41.8 (23)	40.9 (18)	48.3 (115)	238
Malda	5.9 (1)	46.4 (13)	22.6 (7)	36.4 (4)	71.4 (5)	31.9 (30)	94
Birbhum	13.3 (2)	50.0 (6)	33.3 (2)	66.7 (2)	25.0 (1)	32.5 (13)	40
Bardhaman	42.9 (6)	60.0 (12)	81.2 (13)	68.8 (11)	75.0 (3)	64.3 (45)	70
North 24 Parganas	21.4 (3)	93.1 (27)	70.8 (17)	75.0 (12)	71.4 (5)	71.1 (64)	90
Hooghly	25.0 (1)	58.3 (7)	60.0 (6)	87.5 (7)	66.7 (2)	62.2 (23)	37
Bankura	16.7 (1)	46.2 (6)	57.9 (11)	69.2 (9)	25.0 (1)	50.9 (28)	55
Purulia	11.8 (2)	21.9 (7)	36.4 (12)	52.2 (12)	66.7 (6)	34.2 (39)	114
Paschim Medinipur	10.7 (3)	39.4 (26)	60.0 (24)	73.1 (19)	44.4 (8)	44.9 (80)	178
All	21.8 (34)	50.0 (156)	49.0 (144)	53.2 (108)	44.3 (51)	45.6 (493)	1080

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.2.2. Community wise and standard wise percent distribution of Adivasi students receiving private tuition

Community	Students taking private tuition						Total students
	Pre-primary	Primary	Upper primary	Secondary	H. Secondary	Total	
Santal	14.3 (8)	43.8 (39)	49.4 (41)	67.8 (40)	47.6 (10)	44.8 (138)	308
Munda	25.0 (3)	36.0 (9)	46.7 (7)	41.7 (5)	50.0 (3)	38.6 (27)	70
Bhumij	33.3 (2)	56.2 (9)	52.0 (13)	53.3 (8)	69.2 (9)	54.7 (41)	75
Mahali	50.0 (2)	70.0 (7)	75.0 (15)	70.0 (7)	40.0 (2)	67.3 (33)	49
Kora	18.2 (2)	62.5 (10)	37.5 (6)	50.0 (5)	50.0 (3)	44.1 (26)	59
Lodha-Kharia	12.5 (1)	27.3 (6)	38.5 (5)	56.2 (9)	0.0 (0)	33.3 (21)	63
Savar	0.0 (0)	31.2 (5)	75.0 (6)	100.0 (2)	50.0 (1)	41.2 (14)	34
Orao	18.2 (2)	69.2 (18)	59.1 (13)	38.1 (8)	35.7 (5)	48.9 (46)	94
Kisan	11.1 (1)	40.0 (8)	11.8 (2)	50.0 (3)	83.3 (5)	32.8 (19)	58
Limbu	25.0 (1)	30.0 (3)	20.0 (1)	25.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	24.1 (7)	29
Tamang	66.7 (2)	66.7 (8)	62.5 (10)	66.7 (6)	33.3 (3)	59.2 (29)	49
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dupka	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	36.4 (4)	16.7 (1)	75.0 (3)	28.6 (8)	28
Lepcha	20.0 (1)	53.3 (8)	23.5 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	27.7 (13)	47
Mech	87.5 (7)	83.3 (5)	85.7 (6)	50.0 (3)	42.9 (3)	70.6 (24)	34
Rava	0.0 (0)	83.3 (5)	28.6 (2)	33.3 (2)	22.2 (2)	35.5 (11)	31
Bediya	25.0 (2)	88.9 (16)	75.0 (9)	70.0 (7)	50.0 (2)	69.2 (36)	52
All	21.8 (34)	50.0 (156)	49.0 (144)	53.2 (108)	44.3 (51)	45.6 (493)	1080

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.2.3. Distribution of Adivasis by educational qualification and by community (in percent)

Community	Illiterate	Literate but No formal education	Below Class IV	Class IV	Primary	Upper Primary	Secondary or ITI	HS or Diploma	Graduate	Post graduate	B. ED	M Phil	Total
Santal	30.7 (344)	11.6 (130)	6.1 (68)	6.3 (71)	15.3 (171)	18.7 (209)	6.2 (69)	3.6 (40)	1.3 (14)	0.2 (2)	0.1 (1)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (1119)
Munda	23.4 (58)	10.9 (27)	11.7 (29)	8.5 (21)	19.8 (49)	14.5 (36)	7.7 (19)	2.8 (7)	0.8 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (248)
Bhumij	21.1 (59)	12.5 (35)	7.5 (21)	7.9 (22)	19.0 (53)	17.6 (49)	7.5 (21)	5.4 (15)	1.4 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (279)
Mahali	29.5 (52)	7.4 (13)	6.2 (11)	9.7 (17)	17.6 (31)	18.2 (32)	5.7 (10)	5.7 (10)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (176)
Kora	22.3 (54)	11.2 (27)	8.3 (20)	6.2 (15)	13.6 (33)	16.9 (41)	7.9 (19)	9.5 (23)	3.7 (9)	0.4 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (242)
Lodha-Kharia	37.0 (84)	8.4 (19)	12.3 (28)	9.7 (22)	13.2 (30)	12.3 (28)	4.0 (9)	2.6 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.4 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (227)
Savar	46.7 (56)	7.5 (9)	18.3 (22)	12.5 (15)	8.3 (10)	2.5 (3)	4.2 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (120)
Orao	27.6 (97)	8.2 (29)	10.2 (36)	3.7 (13)	13.4 (47)	17.6 (62)	9.4 (33)	8.2 (29)	1.7 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (352)
Kisan	22.6 (37)	13.4 (22)	10.4 (17)	7.9 (13)	11.0 (18)	13.4 (22)	12.2 (20)	7.3 (12)	1.8 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (164)
Limbu	13.0 (16)	5.7 (7)	8.1 (10)	9.8 (12)	14.6 (18)	23.6 (29)	7.3 (9)	13.8 (17)	4.1 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (123)
Tamang	13.4 (33)	2.8 (7)	9.3 (23)	9.3 (23)	15.9 (39)	19.9 (49)	11.8 (29)	11.8 (29)	4.5 (11)	1.2 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (246)
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	19.2 (25)	7.7 (10)	5.4 (7)	6.9 (9)	20.8 (27)	19.2 (25)	7.7 (10)	9.2 (12)	3.8 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (130)
Lepcha	12.1 (19)	8.3 (13)	14.6 (23)	6.4 (10)	22.3 (35)	19.1 (30)	7.0 (11)	7.6 (12)	2.5 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (157)
Mech	23.7 (32)	5.2 (7)	6.7 (9)	8.1 (11)	5.9 (8)	17.0 (23)	14.8 (20)	11.9 (16)	4.4 (6)	2.2 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (135)
Rava	36.7 (47)	1.6 (2)	6.2 (8)	5.5 (7)	18.8 (24)	14.8 (19)	10.2 (13)	3.9 (5)	1.6 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.8 (1)	100.0 (128)
Bediya	19.3 (35)	25.4 (46)	12.2 (22)	4.4 (8)	12.2 (22)	16.6 (30)	6.1 (11)	2.8 (5)	1.1 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (181)
All	26.0 (1048)	10.0 (403)	8.8 (354)	7.2 (289)	15.3 (615)	17.1 (687)	7.6 (308)	5.9 (238)	1.8 (73)	0.2 (10)	0.0 (1)	0.0 (1)	100.0 (4027)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.3.1. Distribution of Adivasi households by availability of kitchen and by community (in percent)

Community	Attached to the building	Away from building	No separate kitchen, cooking takes place in the living room	No separate kitchen, cooking takes place in veranda	No separate kitchen, cooking takes place in open space	Sample size
Santal	22.9 (64)	11.8 (33)	13.2 (37)	35.7 (100)	16.4 (46)	280
Munda	41.4 (29)	18.6 (13)	10.0 (7)	21.4 (15)	8.6 (6)	70
Bhumij	11.4 (8)	12.9 (9)	14.3 (10)	52.9 (37)	8.6 (6)	70
Mahali	30.0 (12)	15.0 (6)	7.5 (3)	35.0 (14)	12.5 (5)	40
Kora	18.3 (11)	16.7 (10)	13.3 (8)	43.3 (26)	8.3 (5)	60
Lodha-Kharia	20.0 (12)	26.7 (16)	15.0 (9)	25.0 (15)	13.3 (8)	60
Savar	20.0 (6)	6.7 (2)	30.0 (9)	30.0 (9)	13.3 (4)	30
Orao	56.2 (45)	25.0 (20)	1.2 (1)	8.8 (7)	8.8 (7)	80
Kisan	38.0 (19)	26.0 (13)	8.0 (4)	24.0 (12)	4.0 (2)	50
Limbu	56.7 (17)	43.3 (13)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Tamang	55.0 (33)	40.0 (24)	3.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	53.3 (16)	36.7 (11)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	30
Lepcha	50.0 (15)	50.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Mech	26.7 (8)	50.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	20.0 (6)	30
Rava	43.3 (13)	50.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	30
Bediya	30.0 (15)	20.0 (10)	20.0 (10)	18.0 (9)	12.0 (6)	50
All	32.3 (323)	22.5 (225)	10.1 (101)	24.7 (247)	10.4 (104)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.3.2. Distribution of Adivasi households by type of fuel used for cooking and by community (in percent)

Community	Wood / Straw / Jute stick / leaf etc	Coal/ Coke / Dung cake /Charcoal etc	LPG	Sample size
Santal	86.4 (242)	11.4 (32)	2.1 (6)	280
Munda	92.9 (65)	4.3 (3)	2.9 (2)	70
Bhumij	94.3 (66)	2.9 (2)	2.9 (2)	70
Mahali	87.5 (35)	2.5 (1)	10.0 (4)	40
Kora	95.0 (57)	1.7 (1)	3.3 (2)	60
Lodha-Kharia	98.3 (59)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	60
Savar	93.3 (28)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	30
Orao	82.5 (66)	5.0 (4)	12.5 (10)	80
Kisan	88.0 (44)	12.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	50
Limbu	63.3 (19)	0.0 (0)	36.7 (11)	30
Tamang	43.3 (26)	5.0 (3)	51.7 (31)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	66.7 (20)	0.0 (0)	33.3 (10)	30
Lepcha	93.3 (28)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	30
Mech	70.0 (21)	0.0 (0)	30.0 (9)	30
Rava	93.3 (28)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (2)	30
Bediya	86.0 (43)	8.0 (4)	6.0 (3)	50
All	84.7 (847)	5.9 (59)	9.4 (94)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.3.3. Distribution of Adivasi households by drainage facility and by community (in percent)

Community	Drainage facility with outfall system	Drainage facility without outfall system	No Drainage facility	Sample size
Santal	4.6 (13)	21.8 (61)	73.6 (206)	280
Munda	5.7 (4)	14.3 (10)	80.0 (56)	70
Bhumij	4.3 (3)	8.6 (6)	87.1 (61)	70
Mahali	15.0 (6)	17.5 (7)	67.5 (27)	40
Kora	0.0 (0)	16.7 (10)	83.3 (50)	60
Lodha-Kharia	6.7 (4)	13.3 (8)	80.0 (48)	60
Savar	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	96.7 (29)	30
Orao	12.5 (10)	28.8 (23)	58.8 (47)	80
Kisan	6.0 (3)	14.0 (7)	80.0 (40)	50
Limbu	13.3 (4)	73.3 (22)	13.3 (4)	30
Tamang	30.0 (18)	56.7 (34)	13.3 (8)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dupka	16.7 (5)	70.0 (21)	13.3 (4)	30
Lepcha	6.7 (2)	80.0 (24)	13.3 (4)	30
Mech	20.0 (6)	53.3 (16)	26.7 (8)	30
Rava	20.0 (6)	60.0 (18)	20.0 (6)	30
Bediya	6.0 (3)	2.0 (1)	92.0 (46)	50
All	8.7 (87)	26.9 (269)	64.4 (644)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.3.4. Distribution of Adivasi households by primary source of drinking water and by community (in percent)

Community	Piped water (supply water)	Tube well	Pump at home or other place	Pucca well	Kuchcha well	Spring, river, canal, tank, pond etc	Sample size
Santal	27.5 (77)	41.1 (115)	7.9 (22)	18.9 (53)	3.9 (11)	7 (2)	280
Munda	17.1 (12)	61.4 (43)	0.0 (0)	14.3 (10)	7.1 (5)	0.0 (0)	70
Bhumij	10.0 (7)	72.9 (51)	2.9 (2)	7.1 (5)	5.7 (4)	1.4 (1)	70
Mahali	10.0 (4)	50.0 (20)	5.0 (2)	27.5 (11)	5.0 (2)	2.5 (1)	40
Kora	15.0 (9)	71.7 (43)	1.7 (1)	11.7 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Lodha-Kharia	20.0 (12)	20.0 (12)	10.0 (6)	40.0 (24)	10.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	60
Savar	20.0 (6)	70.0 (21)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	30
Orao	26.2 (21)	33.8 (27)	1.2 (1)	23.8 (19)	15.0 (12)	0.0 (0)	80
Kisan	32.0 (16)	62.0 (31)	0.0 (0)	2.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	4.0 (2)	50
Limbu	66.7 (20)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	26.7 (8)	30
Tamang	81.7 (49)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	3.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	13.3 (8)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	80.0 (24)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	20.0 (6)	30
Lepcha	43.3 (13)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	56.7 (17)	30
Mech	3.3 (1)	30.0 (9)	13.3 (4)	36.7 (11)	16.7 (5)	0.0 (0)	30
Rava	6.7 (2)	63.3 (19)	26.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	30
Bediya	4.0 (2)	86.0 (43)	10.0 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50
All	27.5 (275)	43.5 (435)	5.2 (52)	14.4 (144)	4.9 (49)	4.5 (45)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.3.5. Distribution of Adivasi households by primary source of drinking water and by district (in percent)

District	Piped water (supply water)	Tube well	Pump at home or other place	Pucca well	Kuchcha well	Spring, river, canal, tank, pond etc	Sample size
Darjeeling	58.5 (86)	6.8 (10)	0.0 (0)	8.8 (13)	2.0 (3)	23.8 (35)	147
Jalpaiguri	28.8 (63)	30.6 (67)	9.6 (21)	18.7 (41)	10.0 (22)	2.3 (5)	219
Maldah	24.1 (19)	40.5 (32)	21.5 (17)	10.1 (8)	0.0 (0)	3.8 (3)	79
Birbhum	8.3 (3)	91.7 (33)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	36
Bardhaman	57.4 (35)	29.5 (18)	1.6 (1)	9.8 (6)	0.0 (0)	1.6 (1)	61
North 24 Parganas	3.7 (3)	90.2 (74)	6.1 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	82
Hooghly	66.7 (22)	33.3 (11)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	33
Bankura	1.8 (1)	78.9 (45)	3.5 (2)	15.8 (9)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	57
Purulia	7.6 (8)	71.4 (75)	0.0 (0)	12.4 (13)	8.6 (9)	0.0 (0)	105
Paschim Medinipur	19.3 (35)	38.7 (70)	3.3 (6)	29.8 (54)	8.3 (15)	0.6 (1)	181
All	27.5 (275)	43.5 (435)	5.2 (52)	14.4 (144)	4.9 (49)	4.5 (45)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.3.6. Distribution of Adivasi households by toilet facility and by community (in percent)

Community	Pit	Septic tank	Not useable	Under construction	Others	No toilet	Sample size
Santal	25.7 (72)	8.2 (23)	3.2 (9)	6.1 (17)	0.0 (0)	56.8 (159)	280
Munda	25.7 (18)	11.4 (8)	5.7 (4)	2.9 (2)	0.0 (0)	54.3 (38)	70
Bhumij	37.1 (26)	2.9 (2)	10.0 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50.0 (50)	70
Mahali	17.5 (7)	17.5 (7)	5.0 (2)	2.5 (1)	0.0 (0)	57.5 (23)	40
Kora	33.3 (20)	13.3 (8)	5.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	48.3 (29)	60
Lodha-kharia	16.7 (10)	3.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	80.0 (48)	60
Savar	23.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	73.3 (22)	30
Orao	31.3 (25)	40.0 (32)	2.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	26.3 (21)	80
Kisan	58.0 (29)	12.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30.0 (15)	50
Limbu	63.3 (19)	26.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10.0 (3)	30
Tamang	35.0 (21)	55.0 (33)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	8.3 (5)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	43.3 (13)	36.7 (11)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	16.7 (5)	30
Lepcha	53.3 (16)	36.7 (11)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (2)	30
Mech	23.3 (7)	63.3 (19)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	13.3 (4)	30
Rava	50.0 (15)	36.7 (11)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	13.3 (4)	30
Bediya	40.0 (20)	12.0 (6)	4.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	44.0 (22)	50
All	32.5 (325)	18.7 (187)	3.0 (30)	2.1 (21)	0.2 (2)	43.5 (435)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.3.7. Distribution of Adivasi households by practice of soap or sanitizing agents and by community (in percent)

Community	Soap	Soil/Ash/sand	Nothing other than water	Sample size
Santal	28.6 (80)	67.5 (189)	3.9 (11)	280
Munda	45.7 (32)	52.9 (37)	1.4 (1)	70
Bhumij	42.9 (30)	52.9 (37)	4.3 (3)	70
Mahali	45.0 (18)	55.0 (22)	0.0 (0)	40
Kora	25.0 (15)	73.3 (44)	1.7 (1)	60
Lodha-Kharia	63.3 (38)	26.7 (16)	10.0 (6)	60
Savar	6.7 (2)	80.0 (24)	13.3 (4)	30
Orao	85.0 (68)	13.8 (11)	1.2 (1)	80
Kisan	64.0 (32)	34.0 (17)	2.0 (1)	50
Limbu	100.0 (30)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Tamang	98.3 (59)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	93.3 (28)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	30
Lepcha	100.0 (30)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Mech	96.7 (29)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	30
Rava	93.3 (28)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	30
Bediya	66.0 (33)	28.0 (14)	6.0 (3)	50
All	55.2 (552)	41.4 (414)	3.4 (34)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.3.8. Distribution of Adivasi out-patients by their health care provider and by community (in percent)

Community	Sub Center / PHC / Govt. hospital	Tea Garden clinic or hospital	Private Doctor / Private Hospital	Unqualified practitioners	Sample size
Santal	20.7 (34)	0.0 (0)	20.1 (33)	56.1 (92)	164
Munda	36.0 (9)	0.0 (0)	16.0 (4)	44.0 (11)	25
Bhumij	40.0 (16)	0.0 (0)	17.5 (7)	42.5 (17)	40
Mahali	31.6 (6)	15.8 (3)	21.1 (4)	26.3 (5)	19
Kora	18.2 (6)	0.0 (0)	27.3 (9)	54.5 (18)	33
Lodha-kharia	35.7 (10)	10.7 (3)	3.6 (1)	50.0 (14)	28
Savar	15.4 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	61.5 (8)	13
Orao	22.9 (8)	20.0 (7)	31.4 (11)	20.0 (7)	35
Kisan	51.5 (17)	0.0 (0)	9.1 (3)	33.3 (11)	33
Limbu	18.2 (2)	9.1 (1)	63.6 (7)	0.0 (0)	11
Tamang	27.3 (3)	9.1 (1)	54.5 (6)	0.0 (0)	11
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dupka	50.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	25.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	4
Lepcha	22.2 (2)	0.0 (0)	66.7 (6)	0.0 (0)	9
Mech	37.5 (3)	0.0 (0)	37.5 (3)	25.0 (2)	8
Rava	22.2 (2)	0.0 (0)	11.1 (1)	55.6 (5)	9
Bediya	19.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	23.8 (5)	57.1 (12)	21
Total	27.2 (126)	3.2 (15)	21.8 (101)	43.6 (202)	463

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.4.1. Distribution of Adivasi households by ownership of land and by district (in percent)

	Landless	Marginal	Small	Semi-medium	Medium	Sample size
Darjeeling	50.3 (74)	42.9 (63)	3.4 (5)	2.7 (4)	0.7 (1)	147
Jalpaiguri	55.3 (121)	41.1 (90)	2.7 (6)	0.9 (2)	0.0 (0)	219
Maldah	1.3 (1)	97.5 (77)	1.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	79
Birbhum	8.3 (3)	83.3 (30)	8.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	36
Bardhaman	9.8 (6)	82.0 (50)	8.2 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	61
North 24 Parganas	6.1 (5)	92.7 (76)	1.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	82
Hooghly	18.2 (6)	81.8 (27)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	33
Bankura	8.8 (5)	75.4 (43)	12.3 (7)	3.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	57
Purulia	1.0 (1)	84.8 (89)	12.4 (13)	1.9 (2)	0.0 (0)	105
Paschim Medinipur	5.5 (10)	86.2 (156)	7.7 (14)	0.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	181
Total	23.2 (232)	70.1 (701)	5.5 (55)	1.1 (11)	0.1 (1)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Note: Landless – less than or equal to 0.002 hectares, Marginal – more than 0.002 hectares but less than or equal to 1.000 hectare, Small – more than 1.000 hectare but less than or equal to 2.000 hectares, Semi-medium – more than 2.000 hectares but less than or equal to 4.000 hectares, Medium – more than 4.000 hectares but less than or equal to 10.000 hectares, Large – more than 10.000 hectares.

Table A.4.2. Distribution of Adivasi agricultural households by possession of agricultural land and by community (in percent)

Community	Marginal	Small	Semi-medium	Medium	Sample size
Santal	85.3 (192)	13.3 (30)	1.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	225
Munda	93.5 (29)	6.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	31
Bhumij	87.5 (49)	10.7 (6)	1.8 (1)	0.0 (0)	56
Mahali	94.1 (16)	5.9 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Kora	87.2 (41)	12.8 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	47
Lodha-Kharia	94.1 (16)	5.9 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Savar	88.9 (8)	11.1 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9
Oraon	100.0 (10)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10
Kisan	100.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	15
Limbu	80.0 (12)	20.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	15
Tamang	90.0 (18)	10.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	20
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	84.2 (16)	5.3 (1)	10.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	19
Lepcha	84.0 (21)	0.0 (0)	12.0 (3)	4.0 (1)	25
Mech	81.0 (17)	19.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	21
Rava	96.2 (25)	3.8 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	26
Bediya	92.9 (13)	7.1 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14
All	87.8 (498)	10.4 (59)	1.6 (9)	0.2 (1)	567

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Note: Marginal – less than or equal to 1.000 hectares, Small – more than 1.000 hectares but less than or equal to 2.000 hectares, Semi-medium – more than 2.000 hectares but less than or equal to 4.000 hectares, Medium – more than 4.000 hectares but less than or equal to 10.000 hectares, Large – more than 10.000 hectares.

Table A.4.3. Distribution of Adivasi agricultural households by possession of agricultural land and by district (in percent)

District	Marginal	Small	Semi-medium	Medium	Sample size
Darjeeling	87.7 (64)	6.8 (5)	4.1 (3)	1.4 (1)	73
Jalpaiguri	88.7 (63)	8.5 (6)	2.8 (2)	0.0 (0)	71
Maldah	97.6 (40)	2.4 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	41
Birbhum	88.9 (24)	11.1 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	27
Bardhaman	87.8 (36)	12.2 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	41
North 24 Parganas	93.8 (15)	6.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	16
Hooghly	100.0 (17)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Bankura	81.2 (39)	14.6 (7)	4.2 (2)	0.0 (0)	48
Purulia	83.5 (76)	14.3 (13)	2.2 (2)	0.0 (0)	91
Paschim Medinipur	87.3 (124)	12.7 (18)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	142
Total	87.8 (498)	10.4 (59)	1.6 (9)	0.2 (1)	567

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Note: Marginal – less than or equal to 1.000 hectares, Small – more than 1.000 hectares but less than or equal to 2.000 hectares, Semi-medium – more than 2.000 hectares but less than or equal to 4.000 hectares, Medium – more than 4.000 hectares but less than or equal to 10.000 hectares, Large – more than 10.000 hectares.

Table A.4.4. Distribution of Adivasi agricultural households by source of irrigation

Source of irrigation	Frequency	Percent	Total households
Tank (Pond/Doba)	34	6.0	567
Well	2	0.4	
Deep/Mini Tube-well/Shallow/Submersible Pump	61	10.8	
Canal	52	9.2	
Pipe line Supply water (PHE-Spring etc)	29	5.1	
River	12	2.1	
Other	3	0.5	

Note: Figures are not mutually exclusive

Table A.4.5. Distribution of Adivasi agricultural households by production of maize and by community (in percent)

Community	Households producing Maize	Producing maize			Sample size
		Primarily for consumption	Primarily for sale	For both consumption & sale	
Santal	3.6 (8)	2.7 (6)	0.4 (1)	0.4 (1)	225
Munda	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	31
Bhumij	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	56
Mahali	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Kora	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	47
Lodha-Kharria	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Savar	22.2 (2)	22.2 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9
Orao	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10
Kisan	6.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (1)	15
Limbu	100.0 (15)	86.7 (13)	13.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	15
Tamang	40.0 (8)	35.0 (7)	5.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	20
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	42.1 (8)	36.8 (7)	0.0 (0)	5.3 (1)	19
Lepcha	68.0 (17)	64.0 (16)	0.0 (0)	4.0 (1)	25
Mech	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	21
Rava	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	26
Bediya	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14
All	10.4 (59)	9.0 (51)	0.7 (4)	0.7 (4)	567

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.4.6. Distribution of Adivasi agricultural households producing potatoes by community (in percent)

Community	Households producing Potatoes	Producing Potato			Sample size
		Primarily for consumption	Primarily for sale	For both consumption & sale	
Santal	13.3 (30)	5.3 (12)	3.1 (7)	4.9 (11)	225
Munda	6.5 (2)	3.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	3.2 (1)	31
Bhumij	12.5 (7)	10.7 (6)	0.0 (0)	1.8 (1)	56
Mahali	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Kora	12.8 (6)	4.3 (2)	0.0 (0)	8.5 (4)	47
Lodha-Kharia	5.9 (1)	5.9 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Savar	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9
Orao	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10
Kisan	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	15
Limbu	6.7 (1)	6.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	15
Tamang	40.0 (8)	10.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	30.0 (6)	20
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	15.8 (3)	5.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	10.5 (2)	19
Lepcha	4.0 (1)	4.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	25
Mech	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	21
Rava	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	26
Bediya	7.1 (1)	7.1 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14
All	10.6 (60)	4.9 (28)	1.2 (7)	4.4 (25)	567

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.4.7. Distribution of Adivasi agricultural households by production of cardamom and by community (in percent)

Community	Households producing Cardamom	Producing Cardamom			Sample size
		Primarily for consumption	Primarily for sale	For both consumption & sale	
Santal	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	225
Munda	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	31
Bhumij	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	56
Mahali	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Kora	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	47
Lodha-Kharia	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Savar	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9
Orao	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10
Kisan	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	15
Limbu	46.7 (7)	0.0 (0)	46.7 (7)	0.0 (0)	15
Tamang	25.0 (5)	10.0 (2)	15.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	20
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	21.1 (4)	0.0 (0)	21.1 (4)	0.0 (0)	19
Lepcha	72.0 (18)	4.0 (1)	68.0 (17)	0.0 (0)	25
Mech	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	21
Rava	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	26
Bediya	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14
All	6.0 (34)	0.5 (3)	5.5 (31)	0.0 (0)	567

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.4.8. Distribution of Adivasi agricultural households by production of betel nut and by their community (in percent)

Community	Households producing Betel nut	Producing Betel nut			Sample size
		Primarily for consumption	Primarily for sale	For both consumption & sale	
Santal	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	225
Munda	3.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	3.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	31
Bhumij	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	56
Mahali	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	17
Kora	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	47
Lodha-Kharia	5.9 (1)	0.0 (0)	5.9 (1)	0.0 (0)	17
Savar	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9
Orao	20.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	20.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	10
Kisan	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	15
Limbu	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	15
Tamang	5.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	5.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	20
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	26.3 (5)	0.0 (0)	26.3 (5)	0.0 (0)	19
Lepcha	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	25
Mech	76.2 (16)	0.0 (0)	76.2 (16)	0.0 (0)	21
Rava	42.3 (11)	0.0 (0)	42.3 (11)	0.0 (0)	26
Bediya	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14
All	6.5 (37)	0.0 (0)	6.5 (37)	0.0 (0)	567

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.4.9. Distribution of Adivasi households by their type of dependence on forest and by community (in percent)

Community	Households dependent on forest	Type of dependence			Sample size
		Collecting forest produce	Grazing	Hunting*	
Santal	51.1 (143)	50.7 (142)	24.6 (69)	8.6 (24)	280
Munda	44.3 (31)	44.3 (31)	22.9 (16)	2.9 (2)	70
Bhumij	68.6 (48)	68.6 (48)	38.6 (27)	4.3 (3)	70
Mahali	45.0 (18)	45.0 (18)	15.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	40
Kora	51.7 (31)	51.7 (31)	18.3 (11)	5.0 (3)	60
Lodha-Kharia	75.0 (45)	75.0 (45)	18.3 (11)	11.7 (7)	60
Savar	83.3 (25)	83.3 (25)	16.7 (5)	33.3 (10)	30
Oraon	23.8 (19)	23.8 (19)	2.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	80
Kisan	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50
Limbu	16.7 (5)	16.7 (5)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	30
Tamang	25.0 (15)	25.0 (15)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	86.7 (26)	86.7 (26)	23.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	30
Lepcha	30.0 (9)	30.0 (9)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	30
Mech	26.7 (8)	26.7 (8)	6.7 (2)	0.0 (0)	30
Rava	90.0 (27)	90.0 (27)	16.7 (5)	0.0 (0)	30
Bediya	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50
All	45.0 (450)	44.9 (449)	16.4 (164)	4.9 (49)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

* Hunting excludes the cases of 'Hunting Festival' here.

Table A.4.10. Distribution of forest dependent Adivasi households by title against individual claim for forest land in villages other than tea garden or cinchona garden and by community (in percent)

Community	Households received title	Households assured but not received title	Sample size
Santal	4.2 (6)	6.3 (9)	143
Munda	30.4 (7)	4.3 (1)	23
Bhumij	2.1 (1)	6.2 (3)	48
Mahali	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14
Kora	3.2 (1)	6.5 (2)	31
Lodha-Kharia	19.4 (7)	5.6 (2)	36
Savar	20.0 (5)	12.0 (3)	25
Oraon	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3
Kisan	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0
Limbu	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3
Tamang	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	11
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	27.3 (6)	13.6 (3)	22
Lepcha	0.0 (0)	11.1 (1)	9
Mech	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	8
Rava	44.4 (12)	3.7 (1)	27
Bediya	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0
All	11.2 (45)	6.2 (25)	403

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.4.11. Distribution of Adivasi households by principal source of income and by community (in percent)

Community	Cultivation	Crafts (HH industry)	Other Self- employment	Gathering Forest Produces	Regular Wage or Salaried Employment	Agricultural Labour	Non- Agricultural Labour	Plantation Work (all type)	Other	Sample size
Santal	46.8 (131)	0.4 (1)	2.9%	0.7%	2.1%	26.4 (74)	16.1 (45)	3.6 (10)	1.1 (3)	280
Munda	21.4 (15)	0.0 (0)	2.9%	1.4%	1.4%	8.6 (6)	28.6 (20)	34.3 (24)	1.4 (1)	70
Bhumij	41.4 (29)	4.3 (3)	2.9%	0.0 (0)	1.4%	27.1 (19)	21.4 (15)	0.0 (0)	1.4 (1)	70
Mahali	10.0 (4)	32.5 (13)	2.5%	0.0 (0)	7.5%	10.0 (4)	5.0 (2)	30.0 (12)	2.5 (1)	40
Kora	38.3 (23)	0.0 (0)	1.7%	0.0 (0)	3.3%	31.7 (19)	25.0 (15)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Lodha-Kharia	8.3 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	33.3%	0.0 (0)	16.7 (10)	10.0 (6)	23.3 (14)	8.3 (5)	60
Savar	6.7 (2)	3.3 (1)	6.7%	23.3%	3.3%	40.0 (12)	16.7 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Orao	1.2 (1)	1.2 (1)	5.0%	0.0 (0)	3.8%	2.5 (2)	10.0 (8)	76.2 (61)	0.0 (0)	80
Kisan	16.0 (8)	0.0 (0)	4.0%	0.0 (0)	2.0%	38.0 (19)	34.0 (17)	0.0 (0)	6.0 (3)	50
Limbu	26.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	16.7%	0.0 (0)	20.0%	0.0 (0)	10.0 (3)	26.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	30
Tamang	13.3 (8)	0.0 (0)	6.7%	0.0 (0)	18.3%	0.0 (0)	11.7 (7)	38.3 (23)	11.7 (7)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	23.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	13.3%	0.0 (0)	23.3%	0.0 (0)	33.3 (10)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	30
Lepcha	46.7 (14)	0.0 (0)	16.7%	0.0 (0)	6.7%	3.3 (1)	23.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	30
Mech	33.3 (10)	0.0 (0)	16.7%	0.0 (0)	16.7%	6.7 (2)	10.0 (3)	10.0 (3)	6.7 (2)	30
Rava	46.7 (14)	6.7 (2)	10.0%	0.0 (0)	3.3%	13.3 (4)	16.7 (5)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	30
Bediya	10.0 (5)	0.0 (0)	22.0%	0.0 (0)	2.0%	6.0 (3)	54.0 (27)	0.0 (0)	6.0 (3)	50
All	28.4 (284)	2.1 (21)	5.9%	3.0%	5.1%	17.5 (175)	19.5 (195)	15.6 (156)	2.9 (29)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.4.12. Distribution of Adivasi workers in West Bengal by their primary occupation and by sex (in percent)

Occupation	Male	Female	Sample size
Agri Labour	40.2 (207)	59.8 (308)	515
Non Agri Labour	80.2 (396)	19.8 (98)	494
Tea-Cinchona-Rubber Garden Worker	43.9 (130)	56.1 (166)	296
Cultivator (all type)	60.0 (379)	40.0 (253)	632
Crafts (Household Industry)	33.3 (18)	66.7 (36)	54
Independent Professional (Private tutor etc)	60.0 (6)	40.0 (4)	10
Regular Wage or Salaried Employment	72.0 (90)	28.0 (35)	125
Self Employment (with Pisciculture) other than cultivation-crafts	67.6 (69)	32.4 (33)	102
Collection of Forest Produces (all type)	27.7 (28)	72.3 (73)	101
Stone collection or Fishing	25.9 (7)	74.1 (20)	27
Other	35.0 (7)	65.0 (13)	20
All	56.3 (1337)	43.7 (1039)	2376

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.4.13. Distribution of Adivasi migrant workers in West Bengal by their occupation at destinations point and by community (in percent)

Community	Agri Labour	Non-Agri Labour	Independent Professional (Private tutor etc)	Regular Wage or Salaried Employee	Self Employment other than cultivation & crafts	Others	Sample size
Santal	51.4 (71)	45.7 (63)	0.0 (0)	2.9 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	138
Munda	10.3 (3)	89.7 (26)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	29
Bhumij	20.6 (7)	76.5 (26)	0.0 (0)	2.9 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	34
Mahali	45.0 (9)	55.0 (11)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	20
Kora	50.0 (21)	42.9 (18)	2.4 (1)	4.8 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	42
Lodha-Kharia	35.7 (5)	57.1 (8)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	7.1 (1)	14
Savar	72.4 (21)	27.6 (8)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	29
Orao	0.0 (0)	73.7 (14)	0.0 (0)	26.3 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	19
Kisan	0.0 (0)	100.0 (31)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	31
Limbu	0.0 (0)	35.7 (5)	0.0 (0)	64.3 (9)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14
Tamang	0.0 (0)	24.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	68.0 (17)	8.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	25
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	0.0 (0)	62.5 (5)	0.0 (0)	25.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	12.5 (1)	8
Lepcha	0.0 (0)	64.0 (16)	0.0 (0)	32.0 (8)	4.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	25
Mech	0.0 (0)	40.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	60.0 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10
Rava	0.0 (0)	85.7 (6)	0.0 (0)	14.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	7
Bediya	0.0 (0)	100.0 (35)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	35
All	28.5 (137)	58.8 (282)	0.2 (1)	11.5(55)	0.6 (3)	0.4 (2)	480

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.4.14. Proportion of unemployed population among various Adivasi communities in West Bengal (in percent)

Community	Unemployed	Sample size
Santal	1.7	1271
Munda	5.9	289
Bhumij	2.3	307
Mahali	5.7	192
Kora	3.7	267
Lodha-Kharia	6.6	256
Savar	2.1	142
Orao	6.5	387
Kisan	2.1	189
Limbu	6.7	134
Tamang	7.2	263
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	11.4	140
Lepcha	7.1	169
Mech	4.7	150
Rava	2.2	138
Bediya	3.0	203
All	4.2	4497

Table A.5.1. Distribution of Adivasi households encountered inadequacy of food in last one year preceding the survey by community and by period of inadequacy (in percent)

Community	No inadequacy	Inadequacy for 30 days or less	Inadequacy for more than 30 days but not exceeding 60 days	Inadequacy for more than 60 days but not exceeding 90 days	Inadequacy for more than 90 days	Sample size
Santal	63.6 (178)	6.1 (17)	17.9 (50)	7.9 (22)	4.6 (13)	280
Munda	75.7 (53)	5.7 (4)	8.6 (6)	5.7 (4)	4.3 (3)	70
Bhumij	55.7 (39)	2.9 (2)	22.9 (16)	14.3 (10)	4.3 (3)	70
Mahali	65.0 (26)	10.0 (4)	17.5 (7)	2.5 (1)	5.0 (2)	40
Kora	55.0 (33)	11.7 (7)	25.0 (15)	5.0 (3)	3.3 (2)	60
Lodha-Kharia	56.7 (34)	10.0 (6)	13.3 (8)	10.0 (6)	10.0 (6)	60
Savar	36.7 (11)	3.3 (1)	16.7 (5)	16.7 (5)	26.7 (8)	30
Orao	80.0 (64)	11.2 (9)	3.8 (3)	5.0 (4)	0.0 (0)	80
Kisan	42.0 (21)	2.0 (1)	18.0 (9)	18.0 (9)	20.0 (10)	50
Limbu	100.0 (30)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Tamang	95.0 (57)	3.3 (2)	1.7 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	96.7 (29)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Lepcha	100.0 (30)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	30
Mech	83.3 (25)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	6.7 (2)	30
Rava	70.0 (21)	10.0 (3)	13.3 (4)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	30
Bediya	70.0 (35)	6.0 (3)	18.0 (9)	6.0 (3)	0.0 (0)	50
All	68.6 (686)	6.0 (60)	13.5 (135)	6.9 (69)	5.0 (50)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.5.2. Distribution of Adivasi households perceiving adequacy of food by frequency of meal taking in a day and by community (in percent)

Community	Frequency of meal			Sample size
	Once in a day	Twice in a day	Thrice in a day or more	
Santal	0.0 (0)	3.9 (7)	96.1 (171)	178
Munda	0.0 (0)	3.8 (2)	96.2 (51)	53
Bhumij	0.0 (0)	12.8 (5)	87.2 (34)	39
Mahali	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (26)	26
Kora	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	100.0 (33)	33
Lodha-Kharia	2.9 (1)	26.5 (9)	70.6 (24)	34
Savar	0.0 (0)	9.1 (1)	90.9 (10)	11
Oraon	1.6 (1)	1.6 (1)	96.9 (62)	64
Kisan	0.0 (0)	9.5 (2)	90.5 (19)	21
Limbu	0.0 (0)	36.7 (11)	63.3 (19)	30
Tamang	0.0 (0)	8.8 (5)	91.2 (52)	57
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	0.0 (0)	20.7 (6)	79.3 (23)	29
Lepcha	0.0 (0)	26.7 (8)	73.3 (22)	30
Mech	0.0 (0)	4.0 (1)	96.0 (24)	25
Rava	0.0 (0)	52.4 (11)	47.6 (10)	21
Bediya	0.0 (0)	8.6 (3)	91.4 (32)	35
All	0.3 (2)	10.5 (72)	89.2 (612)	686

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.5.3. Distribution of Adivasi households perceiving adequacy of food by consumption of specific foods (other than cereals) at least once in a week or never and by community (in percent)

Community	Consuming at least once in a week							Consuming never							Sample size
	Pulses	Vegetables	Egg	Fish	Meat	Milk or Curd	Fruits	Pulses	Vege- tables	Egg	Fish	Meat	Milk or Curd	Fruits	
Santal	61.8 (110)	97.8 (174)	34.3 (61)	42.7 (76)	36.0 (64)	5.6 (10)	1.1 (2)	3.9 (7)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (12)	0.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	78.7 (140)	13.5 (24)	178
Munda	73.6 (39)	96.2 (51)	41.5 (22)	54.7 (29)	30.2 (16)	9.4 (5)	5.7 (3)	5.7 (3)	0.0 (0)	9.4 (5)	0.0 (0)	3.8 (2)	58.5 (31)	24.5 (13)	53
Bhumij	69.2 (27)	100.0 (39)	41.0 (16)	51.3 (20)	38.5 (15)	15.4 (6)	0.0 (0)	2.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	5.1 (2)	0.0 (0)	5.1 (2)	51.3 (20)	20.5 (8)	39
Mahali	88.5 (23)	100.0 (26)	61.5 (16)	61.5 (16)	53.8 (14)	23.1 (6)	15.4 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	34.6 (9)	34.6 (9)	26
Kora	63.6 (21)	100.0 (33)	36.4 (12)	54.5 (18)	48.5 (16)	18.2 (6)	9.1 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9.1 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	60.6 (20)	6.1 (2)	33
Lodha-Kharia	88.2 (30)	100.0 (34)	29.4 (10)	44.1 (15)	35.3 (12)	11.8 (4)	2.9 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14.7 (5)	2.9 (1)	2.9 (1)	64.7 (22)	29.4 (10)	34
Savar	45.5 (5)	100.0 (11)	36.4 (4)	63.6 (7)	54.5 (6)	0.0 (0)	9.1 (1)	27.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	90.9 (10)	0.0 (0)	11
Orao	89.1 (57)	96.9 (62)	65.6 (42)	71.9 (46)	50.0 (32)	17.2 (11)	9.4 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	50.0 (32)	20.3 (13)	64
Kisan	81.0 (17)	100.0 (21)	9.5 (2)	90.0 (4)	14.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	9.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	4.8 (1)	61.9 (13)	0.0 (0)	21
Limbu	90.0 (27)	100.0 (30)	66.7 (20)	66.7 (20)	76.7 (23)	30.0 (9)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	6.7 (2)	3.3 (1)	3.3 (1)	16.7 (5)	13.3 (4)	30
Tamang	91.2 (52)	96.5 (55)	68.4 (39)	54.4 (31)	77.2 (44)	24.6 (14)	3.5 (2)	1.8 (1)	0.0 (0)	1.8 (1)	3.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	26.3 (15)	28.1 (16)	57
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	82.8 (24)	93.1 (27)	62.1 (18)	58.6 (17)	69.0 (20)	20.7 (6)	17.2 (5)	6.9 (2)	0.0 (0)	6.9 (2)	10.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	31.0 (9)	20.7 (6)	29
Lepcha	83.3 (25)	100.0 (30)	36.7 (11)	26.7 (8)	60.0 (18)	26.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	3.3 (1)	0.0 (0)	13.3 (4)	10.0 (3)	30
Mech	88.0 (22)	96.0 (24)	48.0 (12)	60.0 (15)	56.0 (14)	28.0 (7)	8.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	8.0 (2)	8.0 (2)	4.0 (1)	36.0 (9)	20.0 (5)	25
Rava	81.0 (17)	100.0 (21)	42.9 (9)	66.7 (14)	76.2 (16)	23.8 (5)	4.8 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	14.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	38.1 (8)	42.9 (9)	21
Bediya	77.1 (27)	100.0 (35)	37.1 (13)	91.4 (32)	8.6 (3)	8.6 (3)	2.9 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	40.0 (14)	11.4 (4)	35
All	76.2 (523)	98.1 (673)	44.8 (307)	53.6 (368)	46.1 (316)	14.6 (100)	4.8 (33)	2.5 (17)	0.0 (0)	5.8 (40)	1.6 (11)	1.2 (8)	52.6 (361)	18.4 (126)	686

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.5.4. Distribution of Adivasi households purchasing PDS rice and PDS atta (flour) in last one month preceding the survey by community (in percent)

Community	Purchased PDS rice	Not consuming rice	Purchased PDS <i>atta</i> (flour)	Not consuming <i>atta</i> (flour)	Sample size
Santal	94.3 (264)	0.0 (0)	93.6 (262)	4.6 (13)	280
Munda	92.9 (65)	0.0 (0)	92.9 (65)	5.7 (4)	70
Bhumij	98.6 (69)	0.0 (0)	97.1 (68)	1.4 (1)	70
Mahali	92.5 (37)	0.0 (0)	95.0 (38)	5.0 (2)	40
Kora	100.0 (60)	0.0 (0)	96.7 (58)	3.3 (2)	60
Lodha-Kharia	93.3 (56)	0.0 (0)	85.0 (51)	13.3 (8)	60
Savar	93.3 (28)	0.0 (0)	80.0 (24)	16.7 (5)	30
Oraon	90.0 (72)	0.0 (0)	91.2 (73)	0.0 (0)	80
Kisan	98.0 (49)	0.0 (0)	98.0 (49)	2.0 (1)	50
Limbu	90.0 (27)	0.0 (0)	93.3 (28)	3.3 (1)	30
Tamang	88.3 (53)	0.0 (0)	90.0 (54)	0.0 (0)	60
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	83.3 (25)	0.0 (0)	96.7 (29)	0.0 (0)	30
Lepcha	90.0 (27)	0.0 (0)	83.3 (25)	6.7 (2)	30
Mech	73.3 (22)	0.0 (0)	86.7 (26)	6.7 (2)	30
Rava	80.0 (24)	0.0 (0)	90.0 (27)	3.3 (1)	30
Bediya	94.0 (47)	0.0 (0)	86.0 (43)	12.0 (6)	50
All	92.5 (925)	0.0 (0)	92.0 (920)	4.8 (48)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.5.5. Distribution of Adivasi households by type of ration card and by district (in percent)

District	AAY	SPHH	PHH	RKSY I	RKSY II	BPL	APL	T.G. Card	Other	No Card	Sample size
Darjeeling	82.3 (121)	5.4 (8)	1.4 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.7 (1)	2.7 (4)	4.8 (7)	1.4 (2)	0.0 (0)	1.4 (2)	147
Jalpaiguri	59.6 (124)	15.5 (34)	4.6 (10)	0.9 (2)	0.5 (1)	4.1 (9)	7.3 (16)	8.2 (18)	0.9 (2)	1.4 (3)	219
Maldah	12.7 (10)	46.8 (37)	30.4 (24)	2.5 (2)	1.3 (1)	1.3 (1)	2.5 (2)	0.0 (0)	1.3 (1)	1.3 (1)	79
Birbhum	2.8 (1)	52.8 (19)	13.9 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	16.7 (6)	5.6 (2)	0.0 (0)	8.3 (3)	0.0 (0)	36
Bardhaman	11.5 (7)	62.3 (38)	8.2 (5)	3.3 (2)	3.3 (2)	9.8 (6)	1.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	61
North 24 Parganas	18.3 (15)	42.7 (35)	12.2 (10)	1.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	12.2 (10)	11.0 (9)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	2.4 (2)	82
Hooghly	12.1 (4)	69.7 (23)	9.1 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9.1 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	33
Bankura	8.8 (5)	0.0 (0)	1.8 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	87.7 (50)	1.8 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	57
Purulia	9.5 (10)	0.0 (0)	1.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	77.1 (81)	5.7 (6)	0.0 (0)	2.9 (3)	3.8 (4)	105
PaschimMedinipur	21.0 (38)	8.3 (15)	4.4 (8)	1.7 (3)	0.6 (1)	63.5 (115)	0.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	181
All	33.5 (335)	20.9 (209)	6.9 (69)	1.0 (10)	0.6 (6)	28.5 (285)	4.5 (45)	2.0 (20)	0.9 (9)	1.2 (12)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.5.6. Distribution of Adivasi households by MGNREG job card and MGNREG employment status (in last one year preceding the survey) and by district

District	HH holding job card (as percent of total HH)	HH getting job (as percent of total job card holders)	HH not getting jobs as MGNREG scheme not taking place (as percent of total job card holders)	Average days of employment provided for each HH
Darjeeling	88.4 (130)	73.1 (95)	5.4 (7)	39.4
Jalpaiguri	84.9 (186)	61.3 (114)	13.4 (25)	31.2
Maldah	82.3 (65)	21.5 (14)	47.7 (31)	23.1
Birbhum	86.1 (31)	51.6 (16)	9.7 (3)	30.7
Bardhaman	78.7 (48)	22.9 (11)	62.5 (30)	27.9
North 24 Parganas	81.7 (67)	28.4 (19)	34.3 (23)	25.3
Hooghly	87.9 (29)	82.8 (24)	13.8 (4)	29.0
Bankura	87.7 (50)	30.0 (15)	32.0 (16)	16.8
Purulia	88.6 (93)	16.1 (15)	64.5 (60)	35.1
PaschimMedinipur	84.5 (153)	45.1 (69)	32.0 (49)	25.4
All	85.2 (852)	46.0 (392)	29.1 (248)	30.9

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.5.7. Distribution of Adivasi households by reason for being devoid of MGNREG job card (in percent)

Households	Reasons for devoid of job card	Frequency	Percent
Devoid of job cards	No knowledge about the process of getting job card	6	0.6
	No knowledge regarding application to be made for getting job card	31	3.1
	Application for new job card not being taken	4	0.4
	Applied for job card but not received	13	1.3
	Due to political victimization	24	2.4
	Not tried to apply for job cards	9	0.9
	Not looking for MGNREG job	25	2.5
	Other	19	1.9
	No response	17	1.7
	Total	148	14.8
Having job cards		852	85.2
Total Household		1000	100.0

Table A.5.8. Distribution of Adivasi households by type of structure of occupied houses and by district (in percent)

District	Permanent	Semi-Permanent	Temporary	Unclassified	Sample size
Darjeeling	85.0 (125)	15.0 (22)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	147
Jalpaiguri	84.5 (185)	11.9 (26)	3.7 (8)	0.0 (0)	219
Maldah	40.5 (32)	48.1 (38)	11.4 (9)	0.0 (0)	79
Birbhum	25.0 (9)	44.4 (16)	30.6 (11)	0.0 (0)	36
Bardhaman	31.1 (19)	62.3 (38)	6.6 (4)	0.0 (0)	61
North 24 Parganas	36.6 (30)	34.1 (28)	29.3 (24)	0.0 (0)	82
Hooghly	30.3 (10)	60.6 (20)	9.1 (3)	0.0 (0)	33
Bankura	10.5 (6)	77.2 (44)	12.3 (7)	0.0 (0)	57
Purulia	33.3 (35)	39.0 (41)	27.6 (29)	0.0 (0)	105
PaschimMedinipur	17.1 (31)	63.0 (114)	19.3 (35)	0.6 (1)	181
All	48.2 (482)	38.7 (387)	13.0 (130)	0.1 (1)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.5.9. Distribution of Adivasi households by share of houses built under government schemes and by district (in percent)

District	Built under govt. scheme	Under construction or left incomplete	Scheme sanctioned only	Govt. scheme not sanctioned	Sample size
Darjeeling	24.5 (36)	3.4 (5)	1.4 (2)	70.7 (104)	147
Jalpaiguri	14.6 (32)	5.0 (11)	0.5 (1)	79.9 (175)	219
Maldah	6.3 (5)	1.3 (1)	3.8 (3)	88.6 (70)	79
Birbhum	13.9 (5)	27.8 (10)	0.0 (0)	58.3 (21)	36
Bardhaman	23.0 (14)	3.3 (2)	3.3 (2)	70.5 (43)	61
North 24 Parganas	28.0 (23)	15.9 (13)	2.4 (2)	53.7 (44)	82
Hooghly	21.2 (7)	3.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	75.8 (25)	33
Bankura	14.0 (8)	15.8 (9)	0.0 (0)	70.2 (40)	57
Purulia	25.7 (27)	15.2 (16)	3.8 (4)	55.2 (58)	105
Paschim Medinipur	23.8 (43)	3.9 (7)	1.7 (3)	70.7 (128)	181
All	20.0 (200)	7.5 (75)	1.7 (17)	70.8 (708)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.5.10. Distribution of Adivasi households by share of toilets built under government schemes and by district (in percent)

District	Built under govt. scheme	Under construction or left incomplete for govt. schemes	Scheme sanctioned only	Built on their own	No report for construction of toilets	Sample size
Darjeeling	21.8 (32)	1.4 (2)	0.7 (1)	70.1 (103)	6.1 (9)	147
Jalpaiguri	39.7 (87)	1.4 (3)	2.7 (6)	27.9 (61)	28.3 (62)	219
Maldah	35.4 (28)	3.8 (3)	1.3 (1)	15.2 (12)	44.3 (35)	79
Birbhum	44.4 (16)	0.0 (0)	13.9 (5)	2.8 (1)	38.9 (14)	36
Bardhaman	34.4 (21)	3.3 (2)	3.3 (2)	14.8 (9)	44.3 (27)	61
North 24 Parganas	35.4 (29)	1.2 (1)	4.9 (4)	19.5 (16)	39.0 (32)	82
Hooghly	75.8 (25)	3.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	12.1 (4)	9.1 (3)	33
Bankura	40.4 (23)	1.8 (1)	7.0 (4)	5.3 (3)	45.6 (26)	57
Purulia	39.0 (41)	1.0 (1)	1.0 (1)	1.0 (1)	58.1 (61)	105
Paschim Medinipur	14.4 (26)	3.9 (7)	9.4 (17)	3.3 (6)	69.1 (125)	181
All	32.8 (328)	2.1 (21)	4.1 (41)	21.6 (216)	39.4 (394)	1000

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.5.11. Proportion of Adivasi population devoid of some documents necessary for various social security programs (in percent)

Identification documents	Percentage of population did not have the documents	Districts most affected (above the average) from the exclusion	Communities most affected (above the average) from the exclusion
ST Certificate (10 years or more)	75.2	Malda (97.6%), Bardhaman (84.6%), North 24 Pargana (84.0%), Purulia (83.5%), Hoogly (82.5%), Birbhum (82.2%), Paschim Medinipur (78.1%)	Kisan (100.0%), Lodha Kharia (93.0%), Savar (91.8%), Munda (84.3%), Bediya (84.2%), Santal (80.8%), Bhumij (79.6%), Mahali (78.9%)
Bank Account (10 years or more)	20.8	Purulia (34.1%), Malda (30.4%), North 24 Parganas (27.7%), Bardhaman (24.1%), Bankura (23.7%), Hoogly (22.8%), Paschim Medinipur (22.7%)	Savar (51.8%), Lodha Kharia (33.2%), Bediya (28.1%), Bhumij (25.3%), Munda (24.9%), Kisan (24.8%), Santal (24.5%)
Aadhar (5 years or more)	5.4	Bardhaman (8.2%), Paschim Medinipur (7.5%), Purulia (7.2%), Malda (6.8%), Birbhum (5.6%)	Savar (23.8%), Lodha Kharia (12.2%), Lepcha (6.8%), Santal (5.7%)
Health Insurance (all age groups)	55.2	Darjeeling (72.6%), Malda (64.2%), North 24 Parganas (62.1%), Paschim Medinipur (55.8%)	Lepcha (80.5%), Limbu (71.6%), Sherpa - Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa (70.0%), Savar (64.8%), Tamang (64.6%), Lodha Kharia (64.1%), Bediya (62.0%), Munda (59.9%), Oraon (57.8%), Kisan (56.6%)

Table A.6.1. WPR among Adivasis in West Bengal by community and by gender (in percent)

Community	Male	Female	All
Santal	63.8 (403)	52.9 (338)	58.3 (741)
Munda	57.0 (86)	44.2 (61)	50.9 (147)
Bhumij	63.9 (99)	46.7 (71)	55.4 (170)
Mahali	54.3 (50)	51.0 (51)	52.6 (101)
Kora	63.5 (87)	50.8 (66)	57.3 (153)
Lodha, Kharia	59.5 (72)	46.7 (63)	52.7 (135)
Savar	59.7 (40)	58.7 (44)	59.2 (84)
Orao	58.3 (105)	41.5 (86)	49.4 (191)
Kisan	51.1 (48)	53.7 (51)	52.4 (99)
Limbu	58.2 (39)	38.8 (26)	48.5 (65)
Tamang	51.5 (69)	45.0 (58)	48.3 (127)
Sherpa - Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	53.4 (39)	26.9 (18)	40.7 (57)
Lepcha	54.5 (48)	39.5 (32)	47.3 (80)
Mech	61.2 (41)	16.9 (14)	36.7 (55)
Rava	62.9 (44)	32.4 (22)	47.8 (66)
Bediya	68.4 (67)	36.2 (38)	51.7 (105)
All	60.1 (1337)	45.8 (1039)	52.8 (2376)

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.6.2. Distribution of Adivasi female workers in West Bengal by primary occupation and by community (in percent)

Community	Agri-labour	Non Agri-labour	Plantation Work (all type)	Cultivator (all type)	Crafts (Household Industry)	Independent Professional (Private tutor etc)	Regular Wage or Salaried Employee	Self Employment other than cultivation & crafts	Collection of Forest Produces (all type)	Stone collection or Fishing	Other	Sample size
Santal	43.8 (148)	5.9 (20)	3.3 (11)	39.1 (132)	0.3 (1)	0.3 (1)	0.3 (1)	1.5 (5)	3.3 (11)	0.0 (0)	2.4 (8)	338
Munda	21.3 (13)	4.9 (3)	37.7 (23)	11.5 (7)	4.9 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	4.9 (3)	13.1 (8)	1.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	61
Bhumij	43.7 (31)	2.8 (2)	0.0 (0)	25.4 (18)	8.5 (6)	0.0 (0)	1.4 (1)	0.0 (0)	14.1 (10)	4.2 (3)	0.0 (0)	71
Mahali	15.7 (8)	3.9 (2)	29.4 (15)	7.8 (4)	35.3 (18)	0.0 (0)	3.9 (2)	2.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	2.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	51
Kora	50.0 (33)	9.1 (6)	0.0 (0)	36.4 (24)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.5 (1)	3.0 (2)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	66
Lodha-Kharia	22.2 (14)	9.5 (6)	19.0 (12)	3.2 (2)	0.0 (0)	1.6 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	38.1 (24)	4.8 (3)	1.6 (1)	63
Savar	34.1 (15)	6.8 (3)	9.1 (4)	2.3 (1)	9.1 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	38.6 (17)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	44
Orao	1.2 (1)	7.0 (6)	81.4 (70)	1.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	1.2 (1)	5.8 (5)	1.2 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.2 (1)	86
Kisan	54.9 (28)	29.4 (15)	2.0 (1)	11.8 (6)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	2.0 (1)	0.0 (0)	51
Limbu	0.0 (0)	15.4 (4)	30.8 (8)	30.8 (8)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	11.5 (3)	11.5 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	26
Tamang	0.0 (0)	20.7 (12)	34.5 (20)	13.8 (8)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	22.4 (13)	5.2 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	1.7 (1)	58
Sherpa-Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	0.0 (0)	27.8 (5)	5.6 (1)	16.7 (3)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	16.7 (3)	27.8 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	5.6 (1)	18
Lepcha	0.0 (0)	21.9 (7)	0.0 (0)	53.1 (17)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	9.4 (3)	15.6 (5)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	32
Mech	21.4 (3)	0.0 (0)	7.1 (1)	28.6 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	28.6 (4)	7.1 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	7.1 (1)	14
Rava	18.2 (4)	4.5 (1)	0.0 (0)	50.0 (11)	18.2 (4)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	4.5 (1)	4.5 (1)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	22
Bediya	26.3 (10)	15.8 (6)	0.0 (0)	18.4 (7)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	0.0 (0)	10.5 (4)	0.0 (0)	28.9 (11)	0.0 (0)	38
All	29.6 (308)	9.4 (98)	16.0 (166)	24.4 (253)	3.5 (36)	0.4 (4)	3.4 (35)	3.2 (33)	7.0 (73)	1.9 (20)	1.3 (13)	1039

(Figures in the parenthesis indicate the absolute numbers)

Table A.6.3. Adivasi Female Male Ratio (FMR) in West Bengal by community

Community	Population (Male)	Population (Female)	FMR
Santal	632	639	1011
Munda	151	138	914
Bhumij	155	152	981
Mahali	92	100	1087
Kora	137	130	949
Lodha, Kharia	121	135	1116
Savar	67	75	1119
Orao	180	207	1150
Kisan	94	95	1011
Limbu	67	67	1000
Tamang	134	129	963
Sherpa - Bhutia-Toto-Dukpa	73	67	918
Lepcha	88	81	920
Mech	67	83	1239
Rava	70	68	971
Bediya	98	105	1071
All	2226	2271	1020

Geographical Distribution of Adivasi Communities in West Bengal

